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SPORTING  
DETECTIVE STORIES

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SPORTING  
DETECTIVE STORIES

edited by  
ELLERY QUEEN

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24 Russell Square  
London

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## OUTDOOR SPORTS

To all lovers of detective literature who are also enthusiasts of turf and links, of diamond and gridiron, of track and field and rod and reel and gun—to all devotees of land sport and sea sports, of winter sports and summer sports . . . behold these twenty detective stories of theft, murder, and assorted crimes, in each of which some outdoor pastime plays a prominent part in background, character, plot, or solution . . . written by old masters and new masters and investigated by detectives familiar and unfamiliar.





# LONG SHOT

BY

ELLERY QUEEN

*from The Adventures of Ellery Queen*

ELLERY QUEEN IS INTRODUCED TO THE SPORT OF  
KINGS

*"Long Shot" is one of the very few short detective stories with horse-racing as a background.*

"One moment, dear. My favourite fly's just walked into the parlour," cried Paula Paris into her ashes-of-roses telephone. "Oh, Ellery, do sit down! . . . No, dear, you're fishing. This one's a grim hombre with silv'ry eyes, and I have an option on him. Call me to-morrow about the Garbo excitement. And I'll expect your flash the moment Crawford springs her new *coiffure* on palpitating Miss America."

And, the serious business of her Hollywood gossip column concluded, Miss Paris hung up and turned her lips pursily towards Mr. Queen. Mr. Queen had cured Miss Paris of homophobia, or morbid fear of crowds, by the brilliant counter-psychology of making love to her. Alas for the best-laid plans! The patient had promptly succumbed to the cure and, what was worse, in succumbing had infected the physician, too.

"I do believe", murmured the lovely patient, "that I need an extended treatment, Doctor Queen."

So the poor fellow absently gave Miss Paris an extended treatment, after which he rubbed the lipstick from his mouth.

"No oomph," said Miss Paris critically, holding him off and surveying his gloomy countenance. "Ellery Queen, you're in a mess again."

"Hollywood," mumbled Mr. Queen. "The land God forgot. No logic. Disorderly creation. The abiding place of

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chaos. Paula, your Hollywood is driving me c-double-o-ditto!"

"You poor imposed-upon Wimpie," crooned Miss Paris, drawing him on to her spacious maple settee. "Tell Paula all about the nasty old place."

So, with Miss Paris's soft arms about him, Mr. Queen unburdened himself. It seemed that Magna Studios ("The Movies Magnificent"), to whom his soul was chartered, had ordered him as one of its staff writers to concoct a horse-racing plot with a fresh patina. A mystery, of course, since Mr. Queen was supposed to know something about crime.

"With fifty writers on the lot who spend all their time—and money—following the ponies," complained Mr. Queen bitterly, "of course they have to pick on the one serf in their thrall who doesn't know a fetlock from a wither. Paula, I'm a sunk scrivener."

"You don't know *anything* about racing?"

"I'm not interested in racing. I've never even *seen* a race," said Mr. Queen doggedly.

"Imagine that!" said Paula, awed. And she was silent. After a while Mr. Queen twisted in her embrace and said in accusing despair: "Paula, you're thinking of something."

She kissed him and sprang from the settee. "The wrong tense, darling. I've *thought* of something!"

Paula told him all about old John Scott as they drove out into the green and yellow ranch country.

Scott was a vast, shapeless Caledonian with a face as craggy as his native heaths and a disposition not less dour. His inner landscape was bleak except where horses breathed and browsed; and this vulnerable spot had proved his undoing, for he had made two fortunes breeding thoroughbreds and had lost both by racing and betting on them.

"Old John's never stood for any of the crooked dodges of the racing game," said Paula. "He fired Weed Williams, the best jockey he ever had, and had him blackballed by every decent track in the country, so that Williams became a saddle-maker or something, just because of a peccadillo another owner would have winked at. And yet—the inconsistent old

## LONG SHOT

coot!—a few years later he gave Williams's son a job, and Whitey's going to ride Danger, John's best horse, in the Handicap next Saturday."

"You mean the \$100,000 Santa Anita Handicap everybody's in a dither about out here?"

"Yes. Anyway, old John's got a scrunchy little ranch, Danger, his daughter Kathryn, and practically nothing else except a stable of also-rans and breeding disappointments."

"So far," remarked Mr. Queen, "it sounds like the beginning of a Class B movie."

"Except," sighed Paula, "that it's not entertaining. John's really on a spot. If Whitey doesn't ride Danger to a win in the Handicap, it's the end of the road for John Scott. . . . Speaking about roads, here we are."

They turned into a dirt road and ploughed dustily towards a ramshackle ranch-house. The road was pitted, the fences dilapidated, the grassland patchy with neglect.

"With all his troubles," grinned Ellery, "I fancy he won't take kindly to this quest for Racing in Five Easy Lessons."

"Meeting a full-grown man who knows nothing about racing may give the old gentleman a laugh. Lord knows he needs one."

A Mexican cook directed them to Scott's private track, and they found him leaning his weight upon a sagging rail, his small buried eyes puckered on a cloud of dust eddying along the track at the far turn. His thick fingers clutched a stopwatch.

A man in high-heeled boots sat on the rail two yards away, a shotgun in his lap pointing carelessly at the head of a too well-dressed gentleman with a foreign air who was talking to the back of Scott's shaggy head. The well-dressed man sat in a glistening roadster beside a hard-faced chauffeur.

"You got my proposition, John?" said the well-dressed man, with a toothy smile. "You got it?"

"Get the hell off my ranch, Santelli," said John Scott, without turning his head.

"Sure," said Santelli, still smiling. "You think my proposition over, hey, or maybe somethin' happen to your nag, hey?"

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They saw the old man quiver, but he did not turn; and Santelli nodded curtly to his driver. The big roadster roared away.

The dust-cloud on the track rolled towards them and they saw a small, taut figure in sweater and cap perched atop a gigantic stallion, black-coated and lustrous with sweat. The horse was bounding along like a huge cat, his neck arched. He thundered magnificently by.

"2.02 $\frac{4}{5}$ ," they heard Scott mutter to his stop-watch. "Rosemont's ten-furlong time for the Handicap in '37. Not bad . . . Whitey!" he bellowed to the jockey, who had pulled the black stallion up. "Rub him down good!"

The jockey grinned and pranced Danger towards the adjacent stables.

The man with the shotgun drawled: "You got more company, John."

The old man whirled, frowning deeply; his craggy face broke into a thousand wrinkles and he engulfed Paula's slim hand in his two paws. "Paula! It's fine to see ye. Who's this?" he demanded, fastening his cold keen eyes on Ellery.

"Mr. Ellery Queen. But how is Katie? And Danger?"

"You saw him." Scott gazed after the dancing horse. "Fit as a fiddle. He'll carry the handicap weight of a hundred and twenty pounds Saturday an' never feel it. Did it just now with the leads on him. Paula, did ye see that murderin' scalawag?"

"The fashion-plate who just drove away?"

"That was Santelli, and ye heard what he said might happen to Danger." The old man stared bitterly down the road.

"Santelli!" Paula's serene face was shocked.

"Bill, go look after the stallion." The man with the shotgun slipped off the rail and waddled towards the stable. "Just made me an offer for my stable. Hell, the dirty thievin' bookie owns the biggest stable west o' the Rockies—what's he want with my picayune outfit?"

"He owns Broomstick, the Handicap favourite, doesn't he?" asked Paula quietly. "And Danger is figured strongly in the running, isn't he?"

## LONG SHOT

"Quoted five to one now, but track odds'll shorten his price. Broomstick's two to five," growled Scott.

"It's very simple, then. By buying your horse, Santelli can control the race, owning the two best horses."

"Lassie, lassie," sighed Scott. "I'm an old mon, an' I know these thieves. Handicap purse is \$100,000. And Santelli just offered me \$100,000 for my stable!" Paula whistled. "It don't wash. My whole shebang ain't worth it. Danger's no cinch to win. Is Santelli buyin' up all the other horses in the race, too?—the big outfits? I tell ye it's somethin' else, and it's rotten." Then he shook his heavy shoulders straight. "But here I am gabbin' about my troubles. What brings ye cut here, lassie?"

"Mr. Queen here, who's a—well, a friend of mine," said Paula, colouring, "has to think up a horse-racing plot for a movie, and I thought you could help him. He doesn't know a thing about racing."

Scott stared at Mr. Queen, who coughed apologetically. "Well, sir, I don't know but that ye're not a lucky mon. Ye're welcome to the run o' the place. Go over an' talk to Whitey; he knows the racket backwards. I'll be with ye in a few minutes."

The old man lumbered off, and Paula and Ellery sauntered towards the stables.

"Who is this ogre Santelli?" asked Ellery with a frown.

"A gambler and bookmaker with a national hook-up." Paula shivered a little. "Poor John. I don't like it, Ellery."

They turned a corner of the big stable and almost bumped into a young man and a young woman in the lee of the wall, clutching each other desperately and kissing as if they were about to be torn apart for eternity.

"Pardon us," said Paula, pulling Ellery back.

The young lady, her eyes crystal with tears, blinked at her. "Is—is that Paula Paris?" she sniffled.

"The same, Kathryn," smiled Paula. "Mr. Queen, Miss Scott. What on earth's the matter?"

"Everything," cried Miss Scott tragically. "Oh, Paula, we're in the most awful trouble!"

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Her amorous companion backed bashfully off. He was a slender young man clad in grimy, odoriferous overalls. He wore spectacles flourey with the chaff of oats, and there was a grease smudge on one emotional nostril.

"Miss Paris—Mr. Queen. This is Hank Halliday, my—my boy-friend," sobbed Kathryn.

"I see the whole plot," said Paula sympathetically. "Papa doesn't approve of Katie's taking up with a stablehand, the snob! and it's tragedy all around."

"Hank *isn't* a stablehand," cried Kathryn, dashing the tears from her cheeks, which were rosy with indignation. "He's a college graduate who——"

"Kate," said the odoriferous young man with dignity, "let me explain, please. Miss Paris, I have a character deficiency. I am a physical coward."

"Heavens, so am I!" said Paula.

"But a man, you see . . . I am particularly afraid of animals. Horses, specifically." Mr. Halliday shuddered. "I took this—this filthy job to conquer my unreasonable fear." Mr. Halliday's sensitive chin hardened. "I have not yet conquered it, but when I do I shall find myself a real job. And then", he said firmly, embracing Miss Scott's trembling shoulders, "I shall marry Kathryn, papa or no papa."

"Oh, I hate him for being so mean!" sobbed Katie.

"And I——" began Mr. Halliday sombrely.

"Hankus-Pankus!" yelled a voice from the stable. "What the hell you paid for, anyway? Come clean up this mess before I slough you one!"

"Yes, Mr. Williams," said Hankus-Pankus hastily, and he hurried away with an apologetic half-bow. His lady-love ran sobbing off towards the ranch-house.

Mr. Queen and Miss Paris regarded each other. Then Mr. Queen said: "I'm getting a plot, b'gosh, but it's the wrong one."

"Poor kids," sighed Paula. "Well, talk to Whitey Williams and see if the divine spark ignites."

During the next several days Mr. Queen ambled about the Scott ranch, talking to Jockey Williams, to the bespectacled

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Mr. Halliday—who, he discovered, knew as little about racing as he and cared even less—to a continuously tearful Kathryn, to the guard named Bill—who slept in the stable near Danger with one hand on his shotgun—and to old John himself. He learned much about jockeys, touts, racing procedure, gear, handicaps, purses, forfeits, stewards, the ways of bookmakers, famous races and horses and owners and tracks; but the divine spark perversely refused to ignite.

So, on Friday at dusk, when he found himself unaccountably ignored at the Scott ranch, he glumly drove up into the Hollywood hills for a laving in the waters of Gilead.

He found Paula in her garden soothing two anguished young people. Katie Scott was still weeping and Mr. Halliday, the self-confessed craven, for once dressed in an odourless garment, was awkwardly pawing her golden hair.

"More tragedy?" said Mr. Queen. "I should have known. I've just come from your father's ranch, and there's a pall over it."

"Well, there should be!" cried Kathryn. "I told my father where *he* gets off. Treating Hank that way! I'll never speak to him as long as I live! He's—he's *unnatural*!"

"Now, Katie," said Mr. Halliday reprovingly, "that's no way to speak of your own father."

"Hank Halliday, if you had one spark of manhood——!"

Mr. Halliday stiffened as if his beloved had jabbed him with the end of a live wire.

"I didn't mean that, Hankus," sobbed Kathryn, throwing herself into his arms. "I know you can't help being a coward. But when he knocked you down and you didn't even——"

Mr. Halliday worked the left side of his jaw thoughtfully. "You know, Mr. Queen, something happened to me when Mr. Scott struck me. For an instant I felt a strange—er—lust. I really believe if I'd had a revolver—and if I knew how to handle one—I might easily have committed murder then. I saw—I believe that's the phrase—red."

"Hank!" cried Katie in horror.

Hank sighed, the homicidal light dying out of his faded blue eyes.



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"Old John", explained Paula, winking at Ellery, "found these two cuddling again in the stable, and I suppose he thought it was setting a bad example for Danger, whose mind should be on the race to-morrow; so he fired Hank, and Katie blew up and told John off, and she's left his home for ever."

"To discharge me is his privilege," said Mr. Halliday coldly, "but now I owe him no loyalty whatever. I shall *not* bet on Danger to win the Handicap!"

"I hope the big brute loses," sobbed Katie.

"Now, Kate," said Paula firmly, "I've heard enough of this nonsense. I'm going to speak to you like a Dutch aunt."

Katie sobbed on.

"Mr. Halliday," said Mr. Queen formally, "I believe this is our cue to seek a slight libation."

"Kathryn!"

"Hank!"

Mr. Queen and Miss Paris tore the lovers apart.

It was a little after ten o'clock when Miss Scott, no longer weeping but facially still tear-ravaged, crept out of Miss Paris's white frame house and got into her dusty little car.

As she turned her key in the ignition lock and stepped on the starter, a harsh bass voice from the shadows of the back seat said: "Don't yell. Don't make a sound. Turn your car around and keep going till I tell you to stop."

"Eek!" screeched Miss Scott.

A big leathery hand clamped over her trembling mouth. After a few moments the car moved away.

Mr. Queen called for Miss Paris the next day and they settled down to a snail's pace, heading for Arcadia eastward, near which lay the beautiful Santa Anita race-course.

"What happened to Lachrymose Katie last night?" demanded Mr. Queen.

"Oh, I got her to go back to the ranch. She left me a little after ten, a very miserable little girl. What did you do with Hankus-Pankus?"

"I oiled him thoroughly and then took him home. He'd hired a room in a Hollywood boarding-house. He cried on

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my shoulder all the way. It seems old John also kicked him in the seat of his pants, and he's been brooding murderously over it."

"Poor Hankus. The only honest male I've ever met."

"I'm afraid of horses, too," said Mr. Queen hurriedly.

"Oh, you! You're detestable. You haven't kissed me once to-day."

Only the cooling balm of Miss Paris's lips, applied at various points along U.S. Route 66, kept Mr. Queen's temper from boiling over. The roads were sluggish with traffic. At the track it was even worse. It seemed as though every last soul in Southern California had converged upon Santa Anita at once, in every manner of conveyance, from the dusty Model T's of dirt farmers to the shiny metal monsters of the movie stars. The magnificent stands seethed with noisy thousands, a wriggling mosaic of colour and movement. The sky was blue, the sun warm, zephyrs blew, and the track was fast. A race was being run, and the sleek animals were small and fleet and sharply focused in the clear light.

"What a marvellous day for the Handicap!" cried Paula, dragging Ellery along. "Oh, there's Bing, and Al Jolson, and Bob Burns! . . . Hello! . . . And Joan and Clark and Carole . . ."

Despite Miss Paris's over-enthusiastic trail-breaking, Mr. Queen arrived at the track stalls in one piece. They found old John Scott watching with the intentness of a Red Indian as a stablehand kneaded Danger's velvety forelegs. There was a stony set to Scott's gnarled face that made Paula cry: "John! Is anything wrong with Danger?"

"Danger's all right," said the old man curtly. "It's Kate. We had a blow-up over that Halliday boy an' she ran out on me."

"Nonsense, John. I sent her back home last night myself."

"She was at your place? She didn't come home."

"She didn't?" Paula's little nose wrinkled.

"I guess", growled Scott, "she's run off with that Halliday coward. He's not a mon, the lily-livered——"

"We can't all be heroes, John. He's a good boy, and he loves Katie."

The old man stared stubbornly at his stallion, and after a moment they left and made their way towards their box.

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"Funny," said Paula in a scared voice. "She couldn't have run off with Hank; he was with you. And I'd swear she meant to go back to the ranch last night."

"Now, Paula," said Mr. Queen gently. "She's all right." But his eyes were thoughtful and a little perturbed.

Their box was not far from the paddock. During the preliminary races, Paula kept searching the sea of faces with her binoculars.

"Well, well," said Mr. Queen suddenly, and Paula became conscious of a rolling thunder from the stands about them.

"What's the matter? What's happened?"

"Broomstick, the favourite, has been scratched," said Mr. Queen dryly.

"Broomstick? Santelli's horse?" Paula stared at him, paling. "But why? Ellery, there's something in this——"

"It seems he's pulled a tendon and can't run."

"Do you think", whispered Paula, "that Santelli had anything to do with Katie's . . . not getting . . . home?"

"Possible," muttered Ellery. "But I can't seem to fit the blinking thing——"

"Here they come!"

The shout shook the stands. A line of regal animals began to emerge from the paddock. Paula and Ellery rose with the other restless thousands, and craned. The Handicap contestants were parading to the post!

There was High Tor, who had gone lame in the stretch at the Derby two years before and had not run a race since. This was to be his come-back; the insiders held him in a contempt which the public apparently shared, for he was quoted at fifty to one. There was little Fighting Billy. There was Equator, prancing sedately along with Buzz Hickey up. There was Danger! Glossy black, gigantic, imperial, Danger was nervous. Whitey Williams was having a difficult time controlling him and a stablehand was struggling at his bit.

Old John Scott, his big shapeless body unmistakable even at this distance, lumbered from the paddock towards his dancing stallion, apparently to soothe him.

Paula gasped. Ellery said quickly: "What is it?"

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"There's Hank Halliday in the crowd. Up there! Right above the spot where Danger's passing. About fifty feet from John Scott. And Kathryn's not with him!"

Ellery took the glasses from her and located Halliday.

Paula sank into her chair. "Ellery, I've the queerest feeling. There's something wrong. See how pale he is . . ."

The powerful glasses brought Halliday to within a few inches of Ellery's eyes. The boy's glasses were steamed over; he was shaking, as if he had a chill; and yet Ellery could see the globules of perspiration on his cheeks.

And then Mr. Queen stiffened very abruptly.

John Scott had just reached the head of Danger; his thick arm was coming up to pull the stallion's head down. And in that instant Mr. Hankus-Pankus Halliday fumbled in his clothes; and in the next his hand appeared clasping a snub-nosed automatic. Mr. Queen very nearly cried out. For, the short barrel wavering, the automatic in Mr. Halliday's trembling hands pointed in the general direction of John Scott, there was an explosion, and a puff of smoke blew out of the muzzle.

Miss Paris leaped to her feet, and Miss Paris did cry out.

"Why, the crazy young fool!" said Mr. Queen dazedly.

Frightened by the shot, which had gone wild, Danger reared. The other horses began to kick and dance. In a moment the place below boiled with panic-stricken thoroughbreds. Scott, clinging to Danger's head, half-turned in an immense astonishment and looked inquiringly upwards. Whitey struggled desperately to control the frantic stallion.

And then Mr. Halliday shot again. And again. And a fourth time. And at some instant, in the spaces between those shots, the rearing horse got between John Scott and the automatic in Mr. Halliday's shaking hand.

Danger's four feet left the turf. Then, whinnying in agony, flanks heaving, he toppled over on his side.

"Oh, gosh; oh, *gosh*," said Paula, biting her handkerchief.

"Let's go!" shouted Mr. Queen, and he plunged for the spot.

By the time they reached the place where Mr. Halliday had fearfully discharged his automatic, the bespectacled youth

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had disappeared. The people who had stood about him were still too stunned to move. Elsewhere, the stands were in pandemonium.

In the confusion, Ellery and Paula managed to slip through the inadequate track-police cordon hastily thrown about the fallen Danger and his milling rivals. They found old John on his knees beside the black stallion, his big hands steadily stroking the glossy, veined neck. Whitey, pale and bewildered-looking, had stripped off the tiny saddle, and the track veterinary was examining a bullet-wound in Danger's side, near the shoulder. A group of track officials conferred excitedly near by.

"He saved my life," said old John in a low voice to no one in particular. "He saved my life."

The veterinary looked up. "Sorry, Mr. Scott," he said grimly. "Danger won't run this race."

"No. I suppose not." Scott licked his leathery lips. "Is it—mon, is it serious?"

"Can't tell till I dig out the bullet. We'll have to get him out of here and into the hospital right away."

An official said: "Tough luck, Scott. You may be sure we'll do our best to find the scoundrel who shot your horse."

The old man's lips twisted. He climbed to his feet and looked down at the heaving flanks of his fallen thoroughbred. Whitey Williams trudged away with Danger's gear, head hanging.

A moment later the loud-speaker system proclaimed that Danger, Number 5, had been scratched, and that the Handicap would be run immediately the other contestants could be quieted and lined up at the stall-barrier.

"All right, folks, clear out," said a track policeman, as a hospital van rushed up, followed by a hoisting truck.

"What are you doing about the man who shot this horse?" demanded Mr. Queen, not moving.

"Ellery," whispered Paula nervously, tugging at his arm.

"We'll get him; got a good description. Move on, please."

"Well," said Mr. Queen slowly, "I know who he is, do you see?"

"Ellery!"

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"I saw him and recognized him."

They were ushered into the Steward's office just as the announcement was made that High Tor, at fifty to one, had won the Santa Anita Handicap, purse \$100,000, by two and a half lengths . . . almost as long a shot, in one sense, as the shot which had laid poor Danger low, commented Mr. Queen to Miss Paris, *sotto voce*.

"Halliday?" said John Scott, with heavy contempt. "That yellow-livered pup try to shoot me?"

"I couldn't possibly be mistaken, Mr. Scott," said Ellery.

"I saw him, too, John," sighed Paula.

"Who is this Halliday?" demanded the chief of the track police.

Scott told him in monosyllables, relating their quarrel of the day before. "I knocked him down an' kicked him. I guess the only way he could get back at me was with a gun. An' Danger took the rap, poor beastie." For the first time his voice shook.

"Well, we'll get him; he can't have left the park," said the police chief grimly. "I've got it sealed tighter than a drum."

"Did you know", murmured Mr. Queen, "that Mr. Scott's daughter Kathryn has been missing since last night?"

Old John flushed slowly. "You think—my Kate had somethin' to do——"

"Don't be silly, John!" said Paula.

"At any rate," said Mr. Queen dryly, "her disappearance and the attack here to-day can't be a coincidence. I'd advise you to start a search for Miss Scott immediately. And, by the way, send for Danger's gear. I'd like to examine it."

"Say, who the devil are you?" growled the chief.

Mr. Queen told him negligently. The chief looked properly awed. He telephoned to various police headquarters, and he sent for Danger's gear.

Whitey Williams, still in his silks, carried the high small racing saddle in and dumped it on the floor.

"John, I'm awful sorry about what happened," he said in a low voice.

"It ain't your fault, Whitey." The big shoulders drooped.

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"Ah, Williams, thank you," said Mr. Queen briskly. "This is the saddle Danger was wearing a few minutes ago?"

"Yes, sir."

"Exactly as it was when you stripped it off him after the shots?"

"Yes, sir."

"Has anyone had an opportunity to tamper with it?"

"No, sir. I been with it ever since, and no one's come near it but me."

Mr. Queen nodded and knelt to examine the empty-pocketed saddle. Observing the scorched hole in the flap, his brow puckered in perplexity.

"By the way, Whitey," he asked, "how much do you weigh?"

"Hundred and seven."

Mr. Queen frowned. He rose, dusted his knees delicately and beckoned the chief of police. They conferred in undertones. The policeman looked baffled, shrugged, and hurried out.

When he returned, a certain familiar-appearing gentleman in too-perfect clothes and a foreign air accompanied him. The gentleman looked sad.

"I hear some crackpot took a couple o' shots at you, John," he said sorrowfully, "an' got your nag instead. Tough luck."

There was a somewhat quizzical humour behind this ambiguous statement which brought old John's head up in a flash of belligerence.

"You dirty, thievin'——"

"Mr. Santelli," greeted Mr. Queen. "When did you know that Broomstick would have to be scratched?"

"Broomstick?" Mr. Santelli looked mildly surprised at this irrelevant question. "Why, last week."

"So that's why you offered to buy Scott's stable—to get control of Danger?"

"Sure." Mr. Santelli smiled genially. "He was hot. With my nag out, he looked like a cinch."

"Mr. Santelli, you're what is colloquially known as a cock-eyed liar." Mr. Santelli ceased smiling. "You wanted to buy Danger not to see him win, but to see him lose!"

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Mr. Santelli looked unhappy. "Who is this," he appealed to the police chief, "Mister Wacky himself?"

"In my embryonic way," said Mr. Queen, "I have been making a few inquiries in the last several days and my information has it that your bookmaking organization covered a lot of Danger money when Danger was five to one."

"Say, you got somethin' there," said Mr. Santelli, suddenly deciding to be candid.

"You covered about \$200,000, didn't you?"

"Wow," said Mr. Santelli. "This guy's got ideas, ain't he?"

"So," smiled Mr. Queen, "if Danger won the Handicap you stood to drop a very frigid million dollars, did you not?"

"But it's my old friend John some guy tried to rub out," pointed out Mr. Santelli gently. "Go peddle your papers somewheres else, Mister Wack."

John Scott looked bewilderedly from the gambler to Mr. Queen. His jaw-muscles were bunched and jerky.

At this moment a special officer deposited among them Mr. Hankus-Pankus Halliday, his spectacles awry on his nose and his collar ripped away from his prominent Adam's-apple.

John Scott sprang towards him, but Ellery caught his flailing arms in time to prevent a slaughter.

"Murderer! Scalawag! Horse-killer!" roared old John. "What did ye do with my lassie?"

Mr. Halliday said gravely: "Mr. Scott, you have my sympathy."

The old man's mouth flew open. Mr. Halliday folded his scrawny arms with dignity, glaring at the policeman who had brought him in. "There was no necessity to manhandle me. I'm quite ready to face the—er—music. But I shall not answer any questions."

"No gat on him, Chief," said the policeman by his side.

"What did you do with the automatic?" demanded the chief. No answer. "You admit you had it in for Mr. Scott and tried to kill him?" No answer. "Where is Miss Scott?"

"You see," said Mr. Halliday stonily, "how useless it is."



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"Hankus-Pankus," murmured Mr. Queen, "you are superb. You don't know where Kathryn is, do you?"

Hankus-Pankus instantly looked alarmed. "Oh, I say, Mr. Queen. Don't make me talk. Please!"

"But you're expectin' her to join you here, aren't you?"

Hankus paled. The policeman said: "He's a nut. He didn't even try to make a get-away. He didn't even fight back."

"Hank! Darling! Father!" cried Katie Scott; and, straggled-haired and dusty-faced, she flew into the office and flung herself upon Mr. Halliday's thin bosom.

"Katie!" screamed Paula, flying to the girl and embracing her; and in a moment all three, Paula and Kathryn and Hankus, were weeping in concert, while old John's jaw dropped even lower and all but Mr. Queen, who was smiling, stood rooted to their bits of Space in timeless stupefaction.

Then Miss Scott ran to her father and clung to him, and old John's shoulders lifted a little, even though the expression of bewilderment persisted; and she burrowed her head into her father's deep, broad chest.

In the midst of this incredible scene the track veterinary bustled in and said: "Good news, Mr. Scott. I've extracted the bullet and, while the wound is deep, I give you my word Danger will be as good as ever when it's healed." And he bustled out.

And Mr. Queen, his smile broadening, said: "Well, well, a pretty comedy of errors."

"Comedy!" growled old John over his daughter's golden curls. "D'ye call a murderous attempt on my life a comedy?" And he glared fiercely at Mr. Hank Halliday, who was at the moment borrowing a handkerchief from the policeman with which to wipe his eyes.

"My dear Mr. Scott," replied Mr. Queen, "there has been no attempt on your life. The shots were not fired at you. From the very first Danger, and Danger only, was intended to be the victim of the shooting."

"What's this?" cried Paula.

"No, no, Whitey," said Mr. Queen, smiling still more broadly. "The door, I promise you, is well guarded."

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The jockey snarled: "Yah, he's off his nut. Next thing you'll say I plugged the nag. How could I be on Danger's back and at the same time fifty feet away in the grandstand? A million guys saw this screwball fire those shots!"

"A difficulty", replied Mr. Queen, bowing, "I shall be delighted to resolve. Danger, ladies and gentlemen, was handicapped officially to carry one hundred and twenty pounds in the Santa Anita Handicap. This means that when his jockey, carrying the gear, stepped upon the scales in the weighing-out ceremony just before the race, the combined weight of jockey and gear had to come to exactly one hundred and twenty pounds; or Mr. Whitey Williams would never have been allowed by the track officials to mount his horse."

"What's that got to do with it?" demanded the chief, eyeing Mr. Whitey Williams in a hard, unfeeling way.

"Everything. For Mr. Williams told us only a few minutes ago that he weighs only a hundred and seven pounds. Consequently the racing saddle Danger wore when he was shot must have contained various lead weights which, combined with the weight of the saddle, made up the difference between a hundred and seven pounds, Mr. Williams's weight, and a hundred and twenty pounds, the handicap weight. Is that correct?"

"Sure. Anybody knows that."

"Yes, yes, elementary, in Mr. Holmes's imperishable phrase. Nevertheless," continued Mr. Queen, walking over and prodding with his toe the saddle Whitey Williams had fetched to the office, "when I examined this saddle *there were no lead weights in its pockets*. And Mr. Williams assured me no one had tampered with the saddle since he had removed it from Danger's back. But this was impossible, since without the lead weights Mr. Williams and the saddle would have weighed out at less than a hundred and twenty pounds on the scales.

"And so I knew", said Mr. Queen, "that Williams had weighed out with a different saddle, that when he was shot Danger was wearing a different saddle, that the saddle Williams lugged away from the wounded horse was a different saddle; that he secreted it somewhere on the premises and fetched here on our request a *second* saddle—this one on the floor—

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which he had prepared beforehand with a bullet-hole nicely placed in the proper spot. And the reason he did this was that obviously there was something in that first saddle he didn't want anyone to see. And what could that have been but a special pocket containing an automatic, which in the confusion following Mr. Halliday's first, signal shot, Mr. Williams calmly discharged into Danger's body by simply stooping over as he struggled with the frightened horse, putting his hand into the pocket, and firing while Mr. Halliday was discharging his three other futile shots fifty feet away? Mr. Halliday, you see, couldn't be trusted to hit Danger from such a distance, because Mr. Halliday is a stranger to firearms; he might even hit Mr. Williams instead, if he hit anything. That's why I believe Mr. Halliday was using blank cartridges and threw the automatic away."

The jockey's voice was strident, panicky. "You're crazy! Special saddle. Who ever heard——"

Mr. Queen, still smiling, went to the door, opened it, and said: "Ah, you've found it, I see. Let's have it. In Danger's stall? Clumsy, clumsy."

He returned with a racing saddle; and Whitey cursed and then grew still. Mr. Queen and the police chief and John Scott examined the saddle and, surely enough, there was a special pocket stitched into the flap, above the iron hoop, and in the pocket there was a snub-nosed automatic. And the bullet-hole piercing the special pocket had the scorched speckled appearance of powder-burns.

"But where", muttered the chief, "does Halliday figure? I don't get him at all."

"Very few people would," said Mr. Queen, "because Mr. Halliday is, in his modest way, unique among bipeds."

"Huh?"

"Why, he was Whitey's accomplice—weren't you, Hankus?"

Hankus gulped and said: "Yes. I mean no. I mean——"

"But I'm sure Hank wouldn't——" Katie began to cry.

"You see," said Mr. Queen briskly, "Whitey wanted a set-up whereby he would be the last person in California to be suspected of having shot Danger. The quarrel between John

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Scott and Hank gave him a ready-made instrument. If he could make Hank seem to do the shooting, with Hank's obvious motive against Mr. Scott, then nobody would suspect his own part in the affair.

"But to bend Hank to his will he had to have a hold on Hank. What was Mr. Halliday's Achilles heel? Why, his passion for Katie Scott. So last night Whitey's father, Weed Williams, I imagine—wasn't he the jockey you chased from the American turf many years ago, Mr. Scott, and who became a saddle-maker?—kidnapped Katie Scott, and then communicated with Hankus-Pankus and told him just what to do to-day if he ever expected to see his beloved alive again. And Hankus-Pankus took the gun they provided him with, and listened very carefully, and agreed to do everything they told him to do, and promised he would not breathe a word of the truth afterwards, even if he had to go to jail for his crime, because if he did, you see, something terrible would happen to the incomparable Katie."

Mr. Halliday gulped, his Adam's-apple bobbing violently.

"An' all the time this skunk", growled John Scott, glaring at the cowering jockey, "an' his weasel of a father, they sat back an' laughed at a brave mon, because they were havin' their piddling revenge on me, ruining me!" Old John shambled like a bear towards Mr. Halliday. "An' I am a shamed mon to-day, Hank Halliday. For that was the bravest thing I ever did hear of. An' even if I've lost my chance for the Handicap purse, through no fault of yours, and I'm a ruined maggot, here's my hand."

Mr. Halliday took it absently, meanwhile fumbling with his other hand in his pocket. "By the way," he said, "who did win the Handicap, if I may ask? I was so busy, you see——"

"High Tor," said somebody in the babble.

"Really? Then I must cash this ticket," said Mr. Halliday with a note of faint interest.

"Two thousand dollars!" gasped Paula, goggling at the ticket. "He bet two thousand dollars on High Tor at fifty to one!"

"Yes, a little nest-egg my mother left me," said Mr. Halliday. He seemed embarrassed. "I'm sorry, Mr. Scott. You

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made me angry when you—er—kicked me in the pants, so I didn't bet it on Danger. And High Tor was such a beautiful name."

"Oh, Hank," sobbed Katie, beginning to strangle him.

"So now, Mr. Scott," said Hankus-Pankus with dignity, "may I marry Katie and set you up in the racing business again?"

"Happy days!" bellowed old John, seizing his future son-in-law in a rib-cracking embrace.

"Happy days," muttered Mr. Queen, seizing Miss Paris and heading her for the nearest bar.

Heigh, Danger!

# THE SWEET SHOT

BY

E. C. BENTLEY

*from Trent Intervenes*

PHILIP TRENT INVESTIGATES A GOLF MURDER

*It is astonishing how few detective stories about sports have been written. The sport of golf, however, has received some attention from the craft. Stuart Palmer persuaded his maiden-lady detective, Hildegard Withers, to solve a golf mystery in The Riddle of the Black Spade (the magazine Mystery, October, 1934). Agatha Christie's delightful detectival duo, Tommy and Tuppence Beresford, wrestled earnestly with a problem of the links in The Sunningdale Mystery (from Partners in Crime). And many years ago McDonnell Bodkin's Rule-of-Thumb detective, Paul Beck, solved The Murder on the Golf Links (from The Quests of Paul Beck). We believe that Mr. Bentley's famous Trent gets the silver cup for his work in The Sweet Shot, however, and so we have selected it to represent our sports mystery of golf. . . . Ring Lardner and Paul Gallico, notably among many others, have written short stories about golf, but unhappily they are not detective stories.*

“No; I happened to be abroad at the time,” Philip Trent said. “I wasn’t in the way of seeing the English papers, so until I came here this week I never heard anything about your mystery.”

Captain Royden, a small, spare, brown-faced man, was engaged in the delicate—and forbidden—task of taking his automatic telephone instrument to pieces. He now suspended his labours and reached for the tobacco-jar. The large window of his office in the Kempshill clubhouse looked down upon the eighteenth green of that delectable golf course, and his eye roved over the whin-clad slopes beyond as he called on his recollection.

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"Well, if you call it a mystery," he said as he filled a pipe. "Some people do, because they like mysteries, I suppose. For instance, Colin Hunt, the man you're staying with, calls it that. Others won't have it, and say there was a perfectly natural explanation. I could tell you as much as anybody could about it, I dare say."

"As being secretary here, you mean?"

"Not only that. I was one of the two people who were in at the death, so to speak—or next door to it," Captain Royden said. He limped to the mantelshelf and took down a silver box embossed on the lid with the crest and mottoes of the Corps of Royal Engineers. "Try one of these cigarettes, Mr. Trent. If you'd like to hear the yarn, I'll give it you. You have heard something about Arthur Freer, I suppose?"

"Hardly anything," Trent said. "I just gathered that he wasn't a very popular character."

"No," Captain Royden said with reserve. "Did they tell you he was my brother-in-law? No? Well, now, it happened about four months ago, on a Monday—let me see—yes, the second Monday in May. Freer had a habit of playing nine holes before breakfast. Barring Sundays—he was strict about Sunday—he did it most days, even in the beastliest weather, going round all alone usually, carrying his own clubs, studying every shot as if his life depended on it. That helped to make him the very good player he was. His handicap here was two, and at Undershaw he used to be scratch, I believe.

"At a quarter to eight he'd be on the first tee, and by nine he'd be back at his house—it's only a few minutes from here. That Monday morning he started off as usual——"

"And at the usual time?"

"Just about. He had spent a few minutes in the clubhouse blowing up the steward about some trifle. And that was the last time he was seen alive by anybody—near enough to speak to, that is. No one else went off the first tee until a little after nine, when I started round with Browson—he's our local padre; I had been having breakfast with him at the Vicarage. He's got a game leg, like me, so we often play together when he can fit it in.

"We had holed out on the first green, and were walking on to the next tee, when Browson said, 'Great Scot! Look there.

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Something's happened.' He pointed down the fairway of the second hole; and there we could see a man lying sprawled on the turf, face down and motionless. Now there is this point about the second hole—the first half of it is in a dip in the land, just deep enough to be out of sight from any other point on the course, unless you're standing right above it—you'll see when you go round yourself. Well, on the tee, you *are* right above it; and we saw this man lying. We ran to the spot.

"It was Freer, as I had known it must be at that hour. He was dead, lying in a disjointed sort of way no live man could have lain in. His clothing was torn to ribbons, and it was singed too. So was his hair—he used to play bareheaded—and his face and hands. His bag of clubs was lying a few yards away, and the brassie, which he had just been using, was close by the body.

"There wasn't any wound showing, and I had seen far worse things often enough, but the padre was looking sickish, so I asked him to go back to the clubhouse and send for a doctor and the police while I mounted guard. They weren't long coming, and after they had done their job the body was taken away in an ambulance. Well, that's about all I can tell you at first hand, Mr. Trent. If you are staying with Hunt, you'll have heard about the inquest and all that, probably."

Trent shook his head. "No," he said. "Colin was just beginning to tell me, after breakfast this morning, about Freer having been killed on the course in some incomprehensible way, when a man came to see him about something. So, as I was going to apply for a fortnight's run of the course, I thought I would ask you about the affair."

"All right," Captain Royden said. "I can tell you about the inquest anyhow—had to be there to speak my own little piece, about finding the body. As for what had happened to Freer, the medical evidence was rather confusing. It was agreed that he had been killed by some tremendous shock, which had jolted his whole system to pieces and dislocated several joints, but had been not quite violent enough to cause any visible wound. Apart from that, there was a disagreement. Freer's own doctor, who saw the body first, declared he must have been struck by lightning. He said it was true there hadn't been a thunder-



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storm, but that there had been thunder about all that week-end, and that sometimes lightning did act in that way. But the police surgeon, Collins, said there would be no such displacement of the organs from a lightning stroke, even if it did ever happen that way in our climate, which he doubted. And he said that if it had been lightning, it would have struck the steel-headed clubs; but the clubs lay there in their bag quite undamaged. Collins thought there must have been some kind of explosion, though he couldn't suggest what kind."

Trent shook his head. "I don't suppose that impressed the court," he said. "All the same, it may have been all the honest opinion he could give." He smoked in silence a few moments, while Captain Royden attended to the troubles of his telephone instrument with a camel-hair brush. "But, surely," Trent said at length, "if there had been such an explosion as that, somebody would have heard the sound of it."

"Lots of people would have heard it," Captain Royden answered. "But there you are, you see—nobody notices the sound of explosions just about here. There's the quarry on the other side of the road there, and any time after seven a.m. there's liable to be a noise of blasting."

"A dull, sickening thud?"

"Jolly sickening," Captain Royden said, "for all of us living near by. And so that point wasn't raised. Well, Collins is a very sound man; but, as you say, his evidence didn't really explain the thing, and the other fellow's did, whether it was right or wrong. Besides, the coroner and the jury had heard about a bolt from a clear sky, and the notion appealed to them. Anyhow, they brought it in death from misadventure."

"Which nobody could deny, as the song says," Trent remarked. "And was there no other evidence?"

"Yes; some. But Hunt can tell you about it as well as I can; he was there. I shall have to ask you to excuse me now," Captain Royden said. "I have an appointment in the town. The steward will sign you on for a fortnight, and probably get you a game too, if you want one to-day."

Colin Hunt and his wife, when Trent returned to their house for luncheon, were very willing to complete the tale. The

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verdict, they declared, was tripe. Dr. Collins knew his job, whereas Dr. Hoyle was an old footler and Freer's death had never been reasonably explained.

As for the other evidence, it had, they agreed, been interesting, though it didn't help at all. Freer had been seen after he had played his tee-shot at the second hole, when he was walking down to the bottom of the dip towards the spot where he met his death.

"But, according to Royden," Trent said, "that was a place where he couldn't be seen, unless one was right above him."

"Well, this witness *was* right above him," Hunt rejoined. "Over one thousand feet above him, so he said. He was an R.A.F. man, piloting a bomber from Bexford Camp, not far from here. He was up doing some sort of exercise, and passed over the course just at that time. He didn't know Freer, but he spotted a man walking down from the second tee, because he was the only living soul visible on the course. Gossett, the other man in the plane, is a temporary member here, and he did know Freer quite well—or as well as anybody cared to know him—but he never saw him. However, the pilot was quite clear that he saw a man just at the time in question, and they took his evidence so as to prove that Freer was absolutely alone just before his death. The only other person who saw Freer was another man who knew him well; used to be a caddy here, and then got a job at the quarry. He was at work on the hillside, and he watched Freer play the first hole and go on to the second—nobody with him, of course."

"Well, that was pretty well established then," Trent remarked. "He was about as alone as he could be, it seems. Yet something happened somehow."

Mrs. Hunt sniffed sceptically, and lighted a cigarette. "Yes, it did," she said. "However, I didn't worry much about it, for one. Edith—Mrs. Freer, that is: Royden's sister—must have had a terrible life of it with a man like that. Not that she ever said anything—she wouldn't. She is not that sort."

"She is a jolly good sort, anyhow," Hunt declared.

"Yes, she is: too good for most men. I can tell you," Mrs. Hunt added for the benefit of Trent, "if Colin ever took to

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cursing me and knocking me about, my well-known loyalty wouldn't stand the strain for very long."

"That's why I don't do it. It's the fear of exposure that makes me the perfect husband, Phil. She would tie a can to me before I knew what was happening. As for Edith, it's true she never said anything, but the change in her since it happened tells the story well enough. Since she's been living with her brother she has been looking far better and happier than she ever succeeded in doing while Freer was alive."

"She won't be living with him for very long, I dare say," Mrs. Hunt intimated darkly.

"No. I'd marry her myself if I had the chance," Hunt agreed cordially.

"Pooh! You wouldn't be in the first six," his wife said. "It will be Rennie, or Gossett, or possibly Sandy Butler—you'll see. But perhaps you've had enough of the local tittle-tattle, Phil. Did you fix up a game for this afternoon?"

"Yes; with the Jarman Professor of Chemistry in the University of Cambridge," Trent said. "He looked at me as if he thought a bath of vitriol would do me good, but he agreed to play me."

"You've got a tough job," Hunt observed. "I believe he is almost as old as he looks, but he is a devil at the short game, and he knows the course blindfold, which you don't. And he isn't so cantankerous as he pretends to be. By the way, he was the man who saw the finish of the last shot Freer ever played—a sweet shot if ever there was one. Get him to tell you."

"I shall try to," Trent said. "The steward told me about that, and that was why I asked the professor for a game."

Colin Hunt's prediction was fulfilled that afternoon. Professor Hyde, receiving five strokes, was one up at the seventeenth, and at the last hole sent down a four-foot putt to win the match. As they left the green he remarked, as if in answer to something Trent had that moment said, "Yes; I can tell you a curious circumstance about Freer's death."

Trent's eye brightened; for the professor had not said a dozen words during their game, and Trent's tentative allusion

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to the subject after the second hole had been met merely by an intimidating grunt.

"I saw the finish of the last shot he played," the old gentleman went on, "without seeing the man himself at all. A lovely brassie it was, too—though lucky. Rolled to within two feet of the pin."

Trent considered. "I see", he said, "what you mean. You were near the second green, and the ball came over the ridge and ran down to the hole."

"Just so," Professor Hyde said. "That's how you play it—if you can. You might have done it yourself to-day, if your second shot had been thirty yards longer. I've never done it; but Freer often did. After a really good drive, you play a long second, blind, over the ridge; and with a perfect shot, you may get the green. Well, my house is quite near that green. I was pottering about in the garden before breakfast, and just as I happened to be looking towards the green a ball came hopping down the slope and trickled right across to the hole. Of course, I knew whose it must be—Freer always came along about that time. If it had been anyone else, I'd have waited to see him get his three, and congratulate him. As it was, I went indoors, and didn't hear of his death until long afterwards."

"And you never saw him play the shot?" Trent said thoughtfully.

The professor turned a cholerick blue eye on him. "How the deuce could I?" he said huffily. "I can't see through a mass of solid earth."

"I know, I know," Trent said. "I was only trying to follow your mental process. Without seeing him play the shot, you knew it was his second—you say he would have been putting for a three. And you said, too—didn't you?—that it was a brassie shot."

"Simply because, my young friend"—the professor was severe—"I happened to know the man's game. I had played that nine holes with him before breakfast often, until one day he lost his temper more than usual, and made himself impossible. I knew he practically always carried the ridge with his second—I won't say he always got the green—and his brassie

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was the only club that would do it. It is conceivable, I admit," Professor Hyde added a little stiffly, "that some mishap took place and that the shot in question was not actually Freer's second; but it did not occur to me to allow for that highly speculative contingency."

On the next day, after those playing a morning round were started on their perambulation, Trent indulged himself with an hour's practice, mainly on the unsurveyed stretch of the second hole. Afterwards he had a word with the caddy-master; then visited the professional's shop, and won the regard of that expert by furnishing himself with a new mid-iron. Soon he brought up the subject of the last shot played by Arthur Freer. A dozen times that morning, he said, he had tried, after a satisfying drive, to reach the green with his second; but in vain. Fergus MacAdam shook his head. Not many, he said, could strike the ball with yon force. He could get there himself, whiles, but never for certainty. Mr. Freer had the strength, and he kenned how to use it for-by.

What sort of clubs, Trent asked, had Freer preferred? "Lang and heavy, like himsel'. Noo ye mention it," MacAdam said, "I hae them here. They were brocht here after the ahccident." He reached up to the top of a rack. "Ay, here they are. They shouldna be, of course; but naebody came to claim them, and it juist slippit ma mind."

Trent, extracting the brassie, looked thoughtfully at the heavy head with the strip of hard white material inlaid in the face. "It's a powerful weapon, sure enough," he remarked.

"Ay, for a man that could control it," MacAdam said. "I dinna care for yon ivory face mysel'. Some fowk think it gies mair reseelience, ye ken; but there's naething in it."

"He didn't get it from you, then," Trent suggested, still closely examining the head.

"Ay, but he did. I had a lot down from Nelsons while the fashion for them was on. Ye'll find my name", MacAdam added, "stampit on the wood in the usual place, if yer een are seein' richt."

"Well, I don't—that's just it. The stamp is quite illegible."

"Tod! Let's see," the professional said, taking the club in hand. "Guid reason for its being illegible," he went on after a

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brief scrutiny. "It's been obliteratered—that's easy seen. Who ever saw sic a daft-like thing! The wood has juist been crushed some gait—in a vice, I wouldna wonder. Noo, why would onybody want to dae a thing like yon?"

"Unaccountable, isn't it?" Trent said. "Still, it doesn't matter, I suppose. And anyhow, we shall never know."

It was twelve days later that Trent, looking in at the open door of the secretary's office, saw Captain Royden happily engaged with the separated parts of some mechanism in which coils of wire appeared to be the leading motive.

"I see you're busy," Trent said.

"Come in! Come in!" Royden said heartily. "I can do this any time—another hour's work will finish it." He laid down a pair of sharp-nosed pliers. "The electricity people have just changed us over to A.C., and I've got to rewind the motor of our vacuum cleaner. Beastly nuisance," he added, looking down affectionately at the bewildering jumble of disarticulated apparatus on his table.

"You bear your sorrow like a man," Trent remarked; and Royden laughed as he wiped his hands on a towel.

"Yes," he said, "I do love tinkering about with mechanical jobs, and if I do say it myself, I'd rather do a thing like this with my own hands than risk having it faultily done by a careless workman. Too many of them about. Why, about a year ago the company sent a man here to fit a new main fuse-box, and he made a short-circuit with his screw-driver that knocked him right across the kitchen and might very well have killed him." He reached down his cigarette-box and offered it to Trent, who helped himself; then looked down thoughtfully at the device on the lid.

"Thanks very much. When I saw this box before, I put you down for an R.E. man. *Ubique*, and *Quo fas et gloria ducunt*. H'm! I wonder why Engineers were given that motto in particular."

"Lord knows," the Captain said. "In my experience, Sappers don't exactly go where right and glory lead. The dirtiest of all the jobs and precious little of the glory—that's what they get."

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"Still, they have the consolation", Trent pointed out, "of feeling that they are at home in a scientific age, and that all the rest of the Army are amateurs compared with them. That's what one of them once told me, anyhow. Well now, Captain, I have to be off this evening. I've looked in just to say how much I've enjoyed myself here."

"Very glad you did," Captain Royden said. "You'll come again, I hope, now you know that the golf here is not so bad."

"I like it immensely. Also the members. And the secretary." Trent paused to light his cigarette. "I found the mystery rather interesting, too."

Captain Royden's eyebrows lifted slightly. "You mean about Freer's death? So you made up your mind it *was* a mystery."

"Why, yes," Trent said. "Because I made up my mind he had been killed by somebody, and probably killed intentionally. Then, when I had looked into the thing a little, I washed out the 'probably'."

Captain Royden took up a penknife from his desk and began mechanically to sharpen a pencil. "So you don't agree with the coroner's jury?"

"No: as the verdict seems to have been meant to rule out murder or any sort of human agency, I don't. The lightning idea, which apparently satisfied them, or some of them, was not a very bright one, I thought. I was told what Dr. Collins had said against it at the inquest; and it seemed to me he had disposed of it completely when he said that Freer's clubs, most of them steel ones, were quite undamaged. A man carrying his clubs puts them down, when he plays a shot, a few feet away at most; yet Freer was supposed to have been electrocuted without any notice having been taken of them, so to speak."

"H'm! No, it doesn't seem likely. I don't know that that quite decides the point, though," the Captain said. "Lightning plays funny tricks, you know. I've seen a small tree struck when it was surrounded by trees twice the size. All the same, I quite agree there didn't seem to be any sense in the lightning notion. It was thundery weather, but there wasn't any storm that morning in this neighbourhood."

"Just so. But when I considered what had been said about Freer's clubs, it suddenly occurred to me that nobody had said

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anything about *the* club, so far as my information about the inquest went. It seemed clear, from what you and the parson saw, that he had just played a shot with his brassie, when he was struck down; it was lying near him, not in the bag. Besides, old Hyde actually saw the ball he had hit roll down the slope on to the green. Now, it's a good rule to study every little detail when you are on a problem of this kind. There weren't many left to study, of course, since the thing had happened four months before; but I knew Freer's clubs must be somewhere, and I thought of one or two places where they were likely to have been taken, in the circumstances, so I tried them. First, I reconnoitred the caddy-master's shed, asking if I could leave my bag there for a day or two; but I was told that the regular place to leave them was the pro.'s shop. So I went and had a chat with MacAdam, and sure enough it soon came out that Freer's bag was still in his rack. I had a look at the clubs, too."

"And did you notice anything peculiar about them?" Captain Royden asked.

"Just one little thing. But it was enough to set me thinking, and next day I drove up to London, where I paid a visit to Nelsons, the sporting outfitters. You know the firm, of course."

Captain Royden, carefully fining down the point of his pencil, nodded. "Everybody knows Nelsons."

"Yes; and MacAdam, I knew, had an account there for his stocks. I wanted to look over some clubs of a particular make—a brassie, with a slip of ivory let into the face, such as they had supplied to MacAdam. Freer had had one of them from him."

Again Royden nodded.

"I saw the man who shows clubs at Nelsons. We had a talk, and then—you know how little things come out in the course of conversation——"

"Especially", put in the Captain with a cheerful grin, "when the conversation is being steered by an expert."

"You flatter me," Trent said. "Anyhow, it did transpire that a club of that particular make had been bought some months before by a customer whom the man was able to remember. Why he remembered him was because, in the first place, he



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insisted on a club of rather unusual length and weight—much too long and heavy for himself to use, as he was neither a tall man nor of powerful build. The salesman had suggested as much in a delicate way; but the customer said no, he knew exactly what suited him, and he bought the club and took it away with him."

"Rather an ass, I should say," Royden observed thoughtfully.

"I don't think he was an ass, really. He was capable of making a mistake, though, like the rest of us. There were some other things, by the way, that the salesman recalled about him. He had a slight limp, and he was, or had been, an Army officer. The salesman was an ex-Service man, and he couldn't be mistaken, he said, about that."

Captain Royden had drawn a sheet of paper towards him, and was slowly drawing little geometrical figures as he listened. "Go on, Mr. Trent," he said quietly.

"Well, to come back to the subject of Freer's death. I think he was killed by someone who knew Freer never played on Sunday, so that his clubs would be—or ought to be, shall we say?—in his locker all that day. All the following night, too, of course—in case the job took a long time. And I think this man was in a position to have access to the lockers in this clubhouse at any time he chose, and to possess a master-key to those lockers. I think he was a skilful amateur craftsman. I think he had a good practical knowledge of high explosives. There is a branch of the Army"—Trent paused a moment and looked at the cigarette-box on the table—"in which that sort of knowledge is specially necessary, I believe."

Hastily, as if just reminded of the duty of hospitality, Royden lifted the lid of the box and pushed it towards Trent. "Do have another," he urged.

Trent did so with thanks. "They have to have it in the Royal Engineers," he went on, "because—so I'm told—demolition work is an important part of their job."

"Quite right," Captain Royden observed, delicately shading one side of a cube.

"*Ubique!*" Trent mused, staring at the box-lid. "If you are 'everywhere', I take it you can be in two places at the same time. You could kill a man in one place, and at the same time

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be having breakfast with a friend a mile away. Well, to return to our subject yet once more; you can see the kind of idea I was led to form about what happened to Freer. I believe that his brassie was taken from his locker on the Sunday before his death. I believe the ivory face of it was taken off and a cavity hollowed out behind it; and in that cavity a charge of explosive was placed. Where it came from I don't know, for it isn't the sort of thing that is easy to come by, I imagine."

"Oh, there would be no difficulty about that," the Captain remarked. "If this man you're speaking of knew all about H.E., as you say, he could have compounded the stuff himself from materials anybody can buy. For instance, he could easily make tetranitroaniline—that would be just the thing for him, I should say."

"I see. Then perhaps there would be a tiny detonator attached to the inner side of the ivory face, so that a good smack with the brassie would set it off. Then the face would be fixed on again. It would be a delicate job, because the weight of the club-head would have to be exactly right. The feel and balance of the club would have to be just the same as before the operation."

"A delicate job, yes," the Captain agreed. "But not an impossible one. There would be rather more to it than you say, as a matter of fact; the face would have to be shaved down thin, for instance. Still, it could be done."

"Well, I imagine it done. Now, this man I have in mind knew there was no work for a brassie at the short first hole, and that the first time it would come out of the bag was at the second hole, down at the bottom of the dip, where no one could see what happened. What certainly did happen was that Freer played a sweet shot, slap on to the green. What else happened at the same moment we don't know for certain, but we can make a reasonable guess. And then, of course, there's the question what happened to the club—or what was left of it; the handle, say. But it isn't a difficult question, I think, if we remember how the body was found."

"How do you mean?" Royden asked.

"I mean, by whom it was found. One of the two players who found it was too much upset to notice very much. He hurried

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back to the clubhouse; and the other was left alone with the body for, as I estimate it, at least fifteen minutes. When the police came on the scene, they found lying near the body a perfectly good brassie, an unusually long and heavy club, exactly like Freer's brassie in every respect—except one. The name stamped on the wood of the club-head had been obliterated by crushing. That name, I think, was not F. MacAdam, but W. J. Nelson; and the club had been taken out of a bag that was not Freer's—a bag which had the remains, if any, of Freer's brassie at the bottom of it. And I believe that's all." Trent got to his feet and stretched his arms. "You can see what I meant when I said I found the mystery interesting."

For some moments Captain Royden gazed thoughtfully out of the window; then he met Trent's inquiring eye. "If there was such a fellow as you imagine," he said coolly, "he seems to have been careful enough—lucky enough too, if you like—to leave nothing at all of what you could call proof against him. And probably he had personal and private reasons for what he did. Suppose that somebody whom he was much attached to was in the power of a foul-tempered, bullying brute; and suppose he found that the bullying had gone to the length of physical violence; and suppose that the situation was hell by day and by night to this man of yours; and suppose there was no way on earth of putting an end to it except the way he took. Yes, Mr. Trent; suppose all that!"

"I will—I do!" Trent said. "That man—if he exists at all—must have been driven pretty hard, and what he did is no business of mine, anyway. And now—still in the conditional mood—suppose I take myself off."

# THE FAD OF THE FISHERMAN

BY

GILBERT K. CHESTERTON

*from The Man Who Knew Too Much and Other Stories*

HORNE FISHER ANGLES FOR TRUTH IN A FISHING MYSTERY

*Chesterton, who as a writer missed few opportunities, and Horne Fisher, who as a detective missed none at all, combine their unique talents to give us one of the finest fishing mysteries ever written. And who could more appropriately solve a fishing mystery than a Fisher? . . . If you are especially fascinated by the marriage of Izaak Walton and Crime, you might also investigate William MacHarg's Fishermen's Luck, about detective O' Malley, in Carolyn Wells's anthology, The Best American Mystery Stories of the Year: Volume Two; one of Maurice Leblanc's most brilliant stories about Arsène Lupin, Arsène Lupin in Prison, in which the boldest scheme of Lupin's bold career is hatched during a delicious fishing interlude; and, of course, numberless "legal mysteries" by Arthur Train, whose crafty old Mr. Ephraim Tutt is perhaps the most fanatical fisherman in all modern fiction.*

Something can sometimes be too extraordinary to be remembered. If it is clean out of the course of things, and has apparently no causes and no consequences, subsequent events do not recall it, and it remains only a subconscious thing, to be stirred by some accident long after. It drifts apart like a forgotten dream; and it was in the hour of many dreams, at day-break and very soon after the end of dark, that such a strange sight was given to a man sculling a boat down a river in the west country. The man was awake; indeed, he considered himself rather wide awake, being the political journalist, Harold March, on his way to interview various political celebrities in their country seats. But the thing he saw was so inconsequent that it might have been imaginary. It simply slipped past his mind and was lost in later and utterly different events; nor

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did he even recover the memory till he had long afterwards discovered the meaning.

Pale mists of morning lay on the fields and the rushes along one margin of the river; along the other side ran a wall of tawny brick almost overhanging the water. He had shipped his oars and was drifting for a moment with the stream, when he turned his head and saw that the monotony of the long brick wall was broken by a bridge; rather an elegant eighteenth-century sort of bridge with little columns of white stone turning grey. There had been floods and the river still stood very high, with dwarfish trees waist deep in it, and rather a narrow arc of white dawn gleamed under the curve of the bridge.

As his own boat went under the dark archway he saw another boat coming towards him, rowed by a man as solitary as himself. His posture prevented much being seen of him, but as he neared the bridge he stood up in the boat and turned around. He was already so close to the dark entry, however, that his whole figure was black against the morning light, and March could see nothing of his face except the end of two long whiskers or moustaches that gave something sinister to the silhouette, like horns in the wrong place. Even these details March would never have noticed but for what happened in the same instant. As the man came under the low bridge he made a leap at it and hung, with his legs dangling, letting the boat float away from under him. March had a momentary vision of two black kicking legs; then of one black kicking leg; and then of nothing except the eddying stream and the long perspective of the wall. But whenever he thought of it again, long afterwards, when he understood the story in which it figured, it was always fixed in that one fantastic shape—as if those wild legs were a grotesque graven ornament of the bridge itself, in the manner of a gargoyle. At the moment he merely passed, staring, down the stream. He could see no flying figure on the bridge, so it must have already fled; but he was half-conscious of some faint significance in the fact that among the trees round the bridgehead opposite the wall he saw a lamp-post; and, beside the lamp-post, the broad blue back of an unconscious policeman.

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Even before reaching the shrine of his political pilgrimage he had many other things to think of besides the odd incident of the bridge; for the management of a boat by a solitary man was not always easy even on such a solitary stream. And indeed it was only by an unforeseen accident that he was solitary. The boat had been purchased and the whole expedition planned in conjunction with a friend, who had at the last moment been forced to alter all his arrangements. Harold March was to have travelled with his friend Horne Fisher on that inland voyage to Willowood Place, where the Prime Minister was a guest at the moment. More and more people were hearing of Harold March, for his striking political articles were opening to him the doors of larger and larger salons; but he had never met the Prime Minister yet. Scarcely anybody among the general public had ever heard of Horne Fisher; but he had known the Prime Minister all his life. For these reasons, had the two taken the projected journey together, March might have been slightly disposed to hasten it and Fisher vaguely content to lengthen it out. For Fisher was one of those people who are born knowing the Prime Minister. The knowledge seemed to have no very exhilarant effect, and in his case bore some resemblance to being born tired. But he was distinctly annoyed to receive, just as he was doing a little light packing of fishing tackle and cigars for the journey, a telegram from Willowood asking him to come down at once by train, as the Prime Minister had to leave that night. Fisher knew that his friend the journalist could not possibly start till the next day, and he liked his friend the journalist, and had looked forward to a few days on the river. He did not particularly like or dislike the Prime Minister, but he intensely disliked the alternative of a few hours in the train. Nevertheless, he accepted Prime Ministers as he accepted railway trains—as part of a system which he, at least, was not the revolutionist sent on earth to destroy. So he telephoned to March, asking him, with many apologetic curses and faint damns, to take the boat down the river as arranged, that they might meet at Willowood by the time settled; then he went outside and hailed a taxicab to take him to the railway station. There he paused at the bookstall to add to his light luggage a number of cheap

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murder stories, which he read with great pleasure, and without any premonition that he was about to walk into as strange a story in real life.

A little before sunset he arrived, with his light suitcase in hand, before the gate of the long riverside gardens of Willowood Place, one of the smaller seats of Sir Isaac Hook, the master of much shipping and many newspapers. He entered by the gate giving on the road, at the opposite side to the river, but there was a mixed quality in all that watery landscape which perpetually reminded a traveller that the river was near. White gleams of water would shine suddenly like swords or spears in the green thickets. And even in the garden itself, divided into courts and curtained with hedges and high garden trees, there hung everywhere in the air the music of water. The first of the green courts which he entered appeared to be a somewhat neglected croquet lawn, in which was a solitary young man playing croquet against himself. Yet he was not an enthusiast for the game, or even for the garden; and his sallow but well-featured face looked rather sullen than otherwise. He was only one of those young men who cannot support the burden of consciousness unless they are doing something, and whose conceptions of doing something are limited to a game of some kind. He was dark and well dressed in a light holiday fashion, and Fisher recognized him at once as a young man named James Bullen, called, for some unknown reason, Bunker. He was the nephew of Sir Isaac; but, what was much more important at the moment, he was also the private secretary of the Prime Minister.

"Hullo, Bunker!" observed Horne Fisher. "You're the sort of man I wanted to see. Has your chief come down yet?"

"He's only staying for dinner," replied Bullen, with his eye on the yellow ball. "He's got a great speech to-morrow at Birmingham and he's going straight through to-night. He's motoring himself there; driving the car, I mean. It's the one thing he's really proud of."

"You mean you're staying here with your uncle, like a good boy?" replied Fisher. "But what will the chief do at Birmingham without the epigrams whispered to him by his brilliant secretary?"

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"Don't you start ragging me," said the young man called Bunker. "I'm only too glad not to go trailing after him. He doesn't know a thing about maps or money or hotels or anything, and I have to dance about like a courier. As for my uncle, as I'm supposed to come into the estate, it's only decent to be here sometimes."

"Very proper," replied the other. "Well, I shall see you later on," and, crossing the lawn, he passed out through a gap in the hedge.

He was walking across the lawn towards the landing-stage on the river, and still felt all around him, under the dome of golden evening, an Old World savour and reverberation in that river-haunted garden. The next square of turf which he crossed seemed at first sight quite deserted, till he saw in the twilight of trees in one corner of it a hammock and in the hammock a man, reading a newspaper and swinging one leg over the edge of the net.

Him also he hailed by name, and the man slipped to the ground and strolled forward. It seemed fated that he should feel something of the past in the accidents of that place, for the figure might well have been an early Victorian ghost revisiting the ghosts of the croquet hoops and mallets. It was the figure of an elderly man with long whiskers that looked almost fantastic, and a quaint and careful cut of collar and cravat. Having been a fashionable dandy forty years ago, he had managed to preserve the dandyism while ignoring the fashions. A white top-hat lay beside the *Morning Post* in the hammock behind him. This was the Duke of Westmoreland, the relic of a family really some centuries old; and the antiquity was not heraldry but history. Nobody knew better than Fisher how rare such noblemen are in fact, and how numerous in fiction. But whether the duke owed the general respect he enjoyed to the genuineness of his pedigree or to the fact that he owned a vast amount of very valuable property was a point about which Mr. Fisher's opinion might have been more interesting to discover.

"You were looking so comfortable", said Fisher, "that I thought you must be one of the servants. I'm looking for somebody to take this bag of mine; I haven't brought a man down, as I came away in a hurry."



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"Nor have I, for that matter," replied the duke, with some pride. "I never do. If there's one animal alive I loathe it's a valet. I learned to dress myself at an early age and was supposed to do it decently. I may be in my second childhood, but I've not gone so far as being dressed like a child."

"The Prime Minister hasn't brought a valet; he's brought a secretary instead," observed Fisher. "Devilish inferior job. Didn't I hear that Harker was down here?"

"He's over there on the landing-stage," replied the duke, indifferently, and resumed the study of the *Morning Post*.

Fisher made his way beyond the last green wall of the garden on to a sort of towing-path looking on the river and a wooded island opposite. There, indeed, he saw a lean, dark figure with a stoop almost like that of a vulture, a posture well known in the law courts as that of Sir John Harker, the Attorney-General. His face was lined with headwork, for alone among the three idlers in the garden he was a man who had made his own way; and round his bald brow and hollow temples clung dull red hair, quite flat, like plates of copper.

"I haven't seen my host yet," said Horne Fisher, in a slightly more serious tone than he had used to the others, "but I suppose I shall meet him at dinner."

"You can see him now; but you can't meet him," answered Harker.

He nodded his head towards one end of the island opposite, and, looking steadily in the same direction, the other guest could see the dome of a bald head and the top of a fishing-rod, both equally motionless, rising out of the tall undergrowth against the background of the stream beyond. The fisherman seemed to be seated against the stump of a tree and facing towards the other bank, so that his face could not be seen, but the shape of his head was unmistakable.

"He doesn't like to be disturbed when he's fishing," continued Harker. "It's a sort of fad of his to eat nothing but fish, and he's very proud of catching his own. Of course he's all for simplicity, like so many of these millionaires. He likes to come in saying he's worked for his daily bread like a labourer."

"Does he explain how he blows all the glass and stuffs all the upholstery," asked Fisher, "and makes all the silver forks,

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and grows all the grapes and peaches, and designs all the patterns on the carpets? I've always heard he was a busy man."

"I don't think he mentioned it," answered the lawyer. "What is the meaning of this social satire?"

"Well, I am a trifle tired", said Fisher, "of the Simple Life and the Strenuous Life as lived by our little set. We're all really dependent in nearly everything, and we all make a fuss about being independent in something. The Prime Minister prides himself on doing without a chauffeur, but he can't do without a factotum and jack-of-all-trades; and poor old Bunker has to play the part of a universal genius, which God knows he was never meant for. The duke prides himself on doing without a valet, but, for all that, he must give a lot of people an infernal lot of trouble to collect such extraordinary old clothes as he wears. He must have them looked up in the British Museum or excavated out of the tombs. That white hat alone must require a sort of expedition fitted out to find it, like the North Pole. And here we have old Hook pretending to produce his own fish when he couldn't produce his own fish knives or fish forks to eat it with. He may be simple about simple things like food, but you bet he's luxurious about luxurious things, especially little things. I don't include you; you've worked too hard to enjoy playing at work."

"I sometimes think", said Harker, "that you conceal a horrid secret of being useful sometimes. Haven't you come down here to see Number One before he goes on to Birmingham?"

Horne Fisher answered, in a lower voice: "Yes, and I hope to be lucky enough to catch him before dinner. He's got to see Sir Isaac about something just afterwards."

"Hullo!" exclaimed Harker. "Sir Isaac's finished his fishing. I know he prides himself on getting up at sunrise and going in at sunset."

The old man on the island had indeed risen to his feet, facing round and showing a bush of grey beard with rather small, sunken features, but fierce eyebrows and keen, choleric eyes. Carefully carrying his fishing tackle, he was already

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making his way back to the mainland across a bridge of flat stepping-stones a little way down the shallow stream; then he veered round, coming towards his guests and civilly saluting them. There were several fish in his basket and he was in a good temper.

"Yes," he said, acknowledging Fisher's polite expression of surprise, "I get up before anybody else in the house, I think. The early bird catches the worm."

"Unfortunately," said Harker, "it is the early fish that catches the worm."

"But the early man catches the fish," replied the old man, gruffly.

"But from what I hear, Sir Isaac, you are the late man, too," interposed Fisher. "You must do with very little sleep."

"I never had much time for sleeping," answered Hook, "and I shall have to be the late man to-night, anyhow. The Prime Minister wants to have a talk, he tells me, and, all things considered, I think we'd better be dressing for dinner."

Dinner passed off that evening without a word of politics and little enough but ceremonial trifles. The Prime Minister, Lord Merivale, who was a long, slim man with curly grey hair, was gravely complimentary to his host about his success as a fisherman and the skill and patience he displayed; the conversation flowed like the shallow stream through the stepping-stones.

"It wants patience to wait for them, no doubt," said Sir Isaac, "and skill to play them, but I'm generally pretty lucky at it."

"Does a big fish ever break the line and get away?" inquired the politician, with respectful interest.

"Not the sort of line I use," answered Hook, with satisfaction. "I rather specialize in tackle, as a matter of fact. If he were strong enough to do that, he'd be strong enough to pull me into the river."

"A great loss to the community," said the Prime Minister, bowing.

Fisher had listened to all these futilities with inward impatience, waiting for his own opportunity, and when the host

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rose he sprang to his feet with an alertness he rarely showed. He managed to catch Lord Merivale before Sir Isaac bore him off for the final interview. He had only a few words to say, but he wanted to get them said.

He said, in a low voice as he opened the door for the Premier, "I have seen Montmirail; he says that unless we protest immediately on behalf of Denmark, Sweden will certainly seize the ports."

Lord Merivale nodded. "I'm just going to hear what Hook has to say about it," he said.

"I imagine", said Fisher, with a faint smile, "that there is very little doubt what he will say about it."

Merivale did not answer, but lounged gracefully towards the library, whither his host had already preceded him. The rest drifted towards the billiard-room, Fisher merely remarking to the lawyer: "They won't be long. We know they're practically in agreement."

"Hook entirely supports the Prime Minister," assented Harker.

"Or the Prime Minister entirely supports Hook," said Horne Fisher, and began idly to knock the balls about on the billiard table.

Horne Fisher came down next morning in a late and leisurely fashion, as was his reprehensible habit; he had evidently no appetite for catching worms. But the other guests seemed to have felt a similar indifference, and they helped themselves to breakfast from the sideboard at intervals during the hours verging upon lunch. So that it was not many hours later when the first sensation of that strange day came upon them. It came in the form of a young man with light hair and a candid expression, who came sculling down the river and disembarked at the landing-stage. It was, in fact, no other than Mr. Harold March, whose journey had begun far away up the river in the earliest hours of that day. He arrived late in the afternoon, having stopped for tea in a large riverside town, and he had a pink evening paper sticking out of his pocket. He fell on the riverside garden like a quiet and well-behaved thunderbolt, but he was a thunderbolt without knowing it.

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The first exchange of salutations and introductions was common-place enough, and consisted, indeed, of the inevitable repetition of excuses for the eccentric seclusion of the host. He had gone fishing again, of course, and must not be disturbed till the appointed hour, though he sat within a stone's throw of where they stood.

"You see, it's his only hobby," observed Harker, apologetically, "and, after all, it's his own house; and he's very hospitable in other ways."

"I'm rather afraid", said Fisher, in a lower voice, "that it's becoming more of a mania than a hobby. I know how it is when a man of that age begins to collect things, if it's only collecting those rotten little river fish. You remember Talbot's uncle with his toothpicks, and poor old Buzzy and the waste of cigar ashes. Hook has done a lot of big things in his time—the great deal in the Swedish timber trade and the Peace Conference at Chicago—but I doubt whether he cares now for any of those big things as he cares for those little fish."

"Oh, come, come," protested the Attorney-General. "You'll make Mr. March think he has come to call on a lunatic. Believe me, Hook only does it for fun, like any other sport, only he's of the kind that takes his fun sadly. But I bet if there were big news about timber or shipping, he would drop his fun and his fish all right."

"Well, I wonder," said Horne Fisher, looking sleepily at the island in the river.

"By the way, is there any news of anything?" asked Harker of Harold March. "I see you've got an evening paper; one of those enterprising evening papers that come out in the morning."

"The beginning of Lord Merivale's Birmingham speech," replied March, handing him the paper. "It's only a paragraph, but it seems to me rather good."

Harker took the paper, flapped and refolded it, and looked at the STOP PRESS news. It was, as March had said, only a paragraph. But it was a paragraph that had a peculiar effect on Sir John Harker. His lowering brows lifted with a flicker and his eyes blinked, and for a moment his leathery jaw was loosened. He looked in some odd fashion like a very old man.

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Then, hardening his voice and handing the paper to Fisher without a tremor, he simply said:

"Well, here's a chance for the bet. You've got your big news to disturb the old man's fishing."

Horne Fisher was looking at the paper, and over his more languid and less expressive features a change also seemed to pass. Even that little paragraph had two or three large headlines, and his eye encountered SENSATIONAL WARNING TO SWEDEN and WE SHALL PROTEST.

"What the devil——" he said, and his words softened first to a whisper and then a whistle.

"We must tell old Hook at once, or he'll never forgive us," said Harker. "He'll probably want to see Number One instantly, though it may be too late now. I'm going across to him at once. I bet I'll make him forget his fish, anyhow." And, turning his back, he made his way hurriedly along the riverside to the causeway of flat stones.

March was staring at Fisher, in amazement at the effect his pink paper had produced.

"What does it all mean?" he cried. "I always supposed we should protest in defence of the Danish ports, for their sakes and our own. What is all this botheration about Sir Isaac and the rest of you? Do you think it bad news?"

"Bad news!" repeated Fisher, with a sort of soft emphasis beyond expression.

"Is it as bad as all that?" asked his friend, at last.

"As bad as all that?" repeated Fisher. "Why of course it's as good as it can be. It's great news. It's glorious news! That's where the devil of it comes in, to knock us all silly. It's admirable. It's inestimable. It is also quite incredible."

He gazed again at the grey and green colours of the island and the river, and his rather dreary eye travelled slowly round to the hedges and the lawns.

"I felt this garden was a sort of dream," he said, "and I suppose I must be dreaming. But there is grass growing and water moving; and something impossible has happened."

Even as he spoke the dark figure with a stoop like a vulture appeared in the gap of the hedge just above him.

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"You have won your bet," said Harker, in a harsh and almost croaking voice. "The old fool cares for nothing but fishing. He cursed me and told me he would talk no politics."

"I thought it might be so," said Fisher, modestly. "What are you going to do next?"

"I shall use the old idiot's telephone, anyhow," replied the lawyer. "I must find out exactly what has happened. I've got to speak for the Government myself to-morrow." And he hurried away towards the house.

In the silence that followed, a very bewildering silence so far as March was concerned, they saw the quaint figure of the Duke of Westmoreland, with his white hat and whiskers, approaching them across the garden. Fisher instantly stepped towards him with the pink paper in his hand, and, with a few words, pointed out the apocalyptic paragraph. The duke, who had been walking slowly, stood quite still, and for some seconds he looked like a tailor's dummy standing and staring outside some antiquated shop. Then March heard his voice, and it was high and almost hysterical:

"But he must see it; he must be made to understand. It cannot have been put to him properly." Then, with a certain recovery of fullness and even pomposity in the voice, "I shall go and tell him myself."

Among the queer incidents of that afternoon, March always remembered something almost comical about the clear picture of the old gentleman in his wonderful white hat carefully stepping from stone to stone across the river, like a figure crossing the traffic in Piccadilly. Then he disappeared behind the trees of the island, and March and Fisher turned to meet the Attorney-General, who was coming out of the house with a visage of grim assurance.

"Everybody is saying", he said, "that the Prime Minister has made the greatest speech of his life. Peroration and loud and prolonged cheers. Corrupt financiers and heroic peasants. We will not desert Denmark again."

Fisher nodded and turned away towards the towing-path, where he saw the duke returning with a rather dazed expression. In answer to question, he said, in a husky and confidential voice:

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"I really think our poor friend cannot be himself. He refused to listen; he—ah—suggested that I might frighten the fish."

A keen ear might have detected a murmur from Mr. Fisher on the subject of a white hat, but Sir John Harker struck it more decisively:

"Fisher was quite right. I didn't believe it myself, but it's quite clear that the old fellow is fixed on this fishing notion by now. If the house caught fire behind him he would hardly move till sunset."

Fisher had continued his stroll towards the higher embanked ground of the towing-path, and he now swept a long and searching gaze, not towards the island, but towards the distant wooded heights that were the walls of the valley. An evening sky as clear as that of the previous day was settling down all over the dim landscape, but towards the west it was now red rather than gold; there was scarcely any sound but the monotonous music of the river. Then came the sound of a half-stifled exclamation from Horne Fisher, and Harold March looked up at him in wonder.

"You spoke of bad news," said Fisher. "Well, there is really bad news now. I am afraid this is a bad business."

"What bad news do you mean?" asked his friend, conscious of something strange and sinister in his voice.

"The sun has set," answered Fisher.

He went on with the air of one conscious of having said something fatal. "We must get somebody to go across whom he will really listen to. He may be mad, but there's method in his madness. There nearly always is method in madness. It's what drives men mad, being methodical. And he never goes on sitting there after sunset, with the whole place getting dark. Where's his nephew? I believe he's really fond of his nephew."

"Look!" cried March, abruptly. "Why, he's been across already. There he is coming back."

And, looking up the river once more, they saw, dark against the sunset reflections, the figure of James Bullen stepping hastily and rather clumsily from stone to stone. Once he slipped on a stone with a slight splash. When he rejoined the group on the bank his olive face was unnaturally pale.



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The other four men had already gathered on the same spot and almost simultaneously were calling out to him, "What does he say now?"

"Nothing. He says—nothing."

Fisher looked at the young man steadily for a moment; then he started from his immobility and, making a motion to March to follow him, himself strode down to the river crossing. In a few moments they were on the little beaten track that ran round the wooded island, to the other side of it where the fisherman sat. Then they stood and looked at him, without a word.

Sir Isaac Hook was still sitting propped up against the stump of the tree, and that for the best of reasons. A length of his own infallible fishing line was twisted and tightened twice round his throat and then twice round the wooden prop behind him. The leading investigator ran forward and touched the fisherman's hand, and it was as cold as a fish.

"The sun has set," said Horne Fisher, in the same terrible tones, "and he will never see it rise again."

Ten minutes afterwards the five men, shaken by such a shock, were again together in the garden, looking at one another with white but watchful faces. The lawyer seemed the most alert of the group; he was articulate if somewhat abrupt.

"We must leave the body as it is and telephone for the police," he said. "I think my own authority will stretch to examining the servants and the poor fellow's papers, to see if there is anything that concerns them. Of course, none of you gentlemen must leave this place."

Perhaps there was something in his rapid and rigorous legality that suggested the closing of a net or trap. Anyhow, young Bullen suddenly broke down, or perhaps blew up, for his voice was like an explosion in the silent garden.

"I never touched him," he cried. "I swear I had nothing to do with it!"

"Who said you had?" demanded Harker, with a hard eye. "Why do you cry out before you're hurt?"

"Because you all look at me like that," cried the young man, angrily. "Do you think I don't know you're always talking about my damned debts and expectations?"

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Rather to March's surprise, Fisher had drawn away from this first collision, leading the duke with him to another part of the garden. When he was out of earshot of the others he said, with a curious simplicity of manner:

"Westmoreland, I am going straight to the point."

"Well?" said the other, staring at him stolidly.

"You have a motive for killing him," said Fisher.

The duke continued to stare, but he seemed unable to speak.

"I hope you had a motive for killing him," continued Fisher, mildly. "You see, it's rather a curious situation. If you had a motive for murdering, you probably didn't murder. But if you hadn't any motive, why, then perhaps, you did."

"What on earth are you talking about?" demanded the duke, violently.

"It's quite simple," said Fisher. "When you went across he was either alive or dead. If he was alive, it might be you who killed him, or why should you have held your tongue about his death? But if he was dead, and you had a reason for killing him, you might have held your tongue for fear of being accused." Then after a silence he added, abstractedly: "Cyprus is a beautiful place, I believe. Romantic scenery and romantic people. Very intoxicating for a young man."

The duke suddenly clenched his hands and said, thickly, "Well, I had a motive."

"Then you're all right," said Fisher, holding out his hand with an air of huge relief. "I was pretty sure you wouldn't really do it; you had a fright when you saw it done, as was only natural. Like a bad dream come true, wasn't it?"

While this curious conversation was passing, Harker had gone into the house, disregarding the demonstrations of the sulky nephew, and came back presently with a new air of animation and a sheaf of papers in his hand.

"I've telephoned for the police," he said, stopping to speak to Fisher, "but I think I've done most of their work for them. I believe I've found out the truth. There's a paper here . . ." He stopped, for Fisher was looking at him with a singular expression; and it was Fisher who spoke next:

"Are there any papers that are not there, I wonder? I mean that are not there now?" After a pause he added: "Let us

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have the cards on the table. When you went through his papers in such a hurry, Harker, weren't you looking for something to—to make sure it shouldn't be found?"

Harker did not turn a red hair on his hard head, but he looked at the other out of the corners of his eyes.

"And I suppose", went on Fisher, smoothly, "that is why you, too, told us lies about having found Hook alive. You knew there was something to show that you might have killed him, and you didn't dare tell us he was killed. But, believe me, it's much better to be honest now."

Harker's haggard face suddenly lit up as if with infernal flames.

"Honest," he cried, "it's not so damned fine of you fellows to be honest. You're all born with silver spoons in your mouths, and then you swagger about with everlasting virtue because you haven't got other people's spoons in your pockets. But I was born in a Pimlico lodging-house and I had to make my spoon, and there'd be plenty to say I only spoiled a horn or an honest man. And if a struggling man staggers a bit over the line in his youth, in the lower parts of the law, which are pretty dingy, anyhow, there's always some old vampire to hang on to him all his life for it."

"Guatemalan Golcondas, wasn't it?" said Fisher, sympathetically.

Harker suddenly shuddered. Then he said, "I believe you must know everything, like God Almighty."

"I know too much," said Horne Fisher, "and all the wrong things."

The other three men were drawing nearer to them, but before they came too near, Harker said, in a voice that had recovered all its firmness:

"Yes, I did destroy a paper, but I really did find a paper, too; and I believe that it clears us all."

"Very well," said Fisher, in a louder and more cheerful tone. "Let us all have the benefit of it."

"On the very top of Sir Isaac's papers", explained Harker, "there was a threatening letter from a man named Hugo. It threatens to kill our unfortunate friend very much in the way that he was actually killed. It is a wild letter, full of taunts;

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you can see it for yourselves; but it makes a particular point of poor Hook's habit of fishing from the island. Above all, the man professes to be writing from a boat. And, since we alone went across to him," and he smiled in a rather ugly fashion, "the crime must have been committed by a man passing in a boat."

"Why, dear me!" cried the duke, with something almost amounting to animation. "Why, I remember the man called Hugo quite well! He was a sort of body servant and body-guard of Sir Isaac. You see, Sir Isaac was in some fear of assault. He was—he was not very popular with several people. Hugo was discharged after some row or other; but I remember him well. He was a great big Hungarian fellow with great moustaches that stood out on each side of his face."

A door opened in the darkness of Harold March's memory, or, rather, oblivion, and showed a shining landscape, like that of a lost dream. It was rather a waterscape than a landscape, a thing of flooded meadows and low trees and the dark archway of a bridge. And for one instant he saw again the man with moustaches like dark horns leap up on to the bridge and disappear.

"Good heavens!" he cried. "Why, I met the murderer this morning!"

Horne Fisher and Harold March had their day on the river, after all, for the little group broke up when the police arrived. They declared that the coincidence of March's evidence had cleared the whole company, and clinched the case against the flying Hugo. Whether that Hungarian fugitive would ever be caught appeared to Horne Fisher to be highly doubtful; nor can it be pretended that he displayed any very demoniac detective energy in the matter as he leaned back in the boat cushions, smoking, and watching the swaying reeds slide past.

"It was a very good notion to hop up on to the bridge," he said. "An empty boat means very little; he hasn't been seen to land on either bank, and he's walked off the bridge without walking on to it, so to speak. He's got twenty-four hours'

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start; his moustaches will disappear, and then he will disappear. I think there is every hope of his escape."

"Hope?" repeated March, and stopped sculling for an instant.

"Yes, hope," repeated the other. "To begin with, I'm not going to be exactly consumed with Corsican revenge because somebody has killed Hook. Perhaps you may guess by this time what Hook was. A damned bloodsucking blackmailer was that simple, strenuous, self-made captain of industry. He had secrets against nearly everybody; one against poor old Westmoreland about an early marriage in Cyprus that might have put the duchess in a queer position; and one against Harker about some flutter with his client's money when he was a young solicitor. That's why they went to pieces when they found him murdered, of course. They felt as if they'd done it in a dream. But I admit I have another reason for not wanting our Hungarian friend actually hanged for the murder."

"And what is that?" asked his friend.

"Only that he didn't commit the murder," answered Fisher.

Harold March laid down the oars and let the boat drift for a moment.

"Do you know, I was half expecting something like that," he said. "It was quite irrational, but it was hanging about in the atmosphere, like thunder in the air."

"On the contrary, it's finding Hugo guilty that's irrational," replied Fisher. "Don't you see that they're condemning him for the very reason for which they acquit everybody else? Harker and Westmoreland were silent because they found him murdered, and knew there were papers that made them look like the murderers. Well, so did Hugo find him murdered, and so did Hugo know there was a paper that would make him look like the murderer. He had written it himself the day before."

"But in that case," said March, frowning, "at what sort of unearthly hour in the morning was the murder really committed? It was barely daylight when I met him at the bridge, and that's some way above the island."

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"The answer is very simple," replied Fisher. "The crime was not committed in the morning. The crime was not committed on the island."

March stared at the shining water without replying, but Fisher resumed like one who had been asked a question:

"Every intelligent murder involves taking advantage of some one uncommon feature in a common situation. The feature here was the fancy of old Hook for being the first man up every morning, his fixed routine as an angler, and his annoyance at being disturbed. The murderer strangled him in his own house after dinner on the night before, carried his corpse, with all his fishing tackle, across the stream in the dead of night, tied him to the tree, and left him there under the stars. It was a dead man who sat fishing there all day. Then the murderer went back to the house, or, rather, to the garage, and went off in his motor car. The murderer drove his own motor car."

Fisher glanced at his friend's face and went on. "You look horrified, and the thing is horrible. But other things are horrible, too. If some obscure man had been hagridden by a blackmailer and had his family life ruined, you wouldn't think the murder of his persecutor the most inexcusable of murders. Is it any worse when a whole great nation is set free as well as a family? By this warning to Sweden we shall probably prevent war and not precipitate it, and save many thousand lives rather more valuable than the life of that viper. Oh, I'm not talking sophistry or seriously justifying the thing, but the slavery that held him and his country was a thousand times less justifiable. If I'd really been sharp I should have guessed it from his smooth, deadly smiling at dinner that night. Do you remember that silly talk about how old Isaac could always play his fish? In a pretty hellish sense he was a fisher of men."

Harold March took the oars and began to row again.

"I remember," he said, "and about how a big fish might break the line and get away."

# MAN BITES DOG

BY

ELLERY QUEEN

*from The New Adventures of Ellery Queen*

ELLERY QUEEN SOLVES A WORLD SERIES BASEBALL MYSTERY

*Modesty has been vanquished by necessity in the selection of Man Bites Dog, by Ellery Queen. It is the only detective short story concerning the greatest American pastime, baseball, within the knowledge of your Editors.*

Anyone observing the tigerish pacings, the gnawings of lip, the contortions of brow, and the fierce melancholy which characterized the conduct of Mr. Ellery Queen, the noted sleuth, during those early October days in Hollywood, would have said reverently that the great man's intellect was once more locked in titanic struggles with the forces of evil.

"Paula," Mr. Queen said to Paula Paris, "I am going mad."

"I hope", said Miss Paris tenderly, "it's love."

Mr. Queen paced, swathed in yards of thought. Queenly Miss Paris observed him with melting eyes. When he had first encountered her, Miss Paris had been in the grip of a morbid psychology. She had been in deathly terror of crowds. "Crowd phobia", the doctors called it. Mr. Queen had cured her by the curious method of making love to her. And now she was infected by the cure.

"Is it?" asked Miss Paris, her heart in her eyes.

"Eh?" said Mr. Queen. "What? Oh, no. I mean—it's the World Series." He looked savage. "Don't you realize what's happening? The New York Giants and the New York Yankees are waging mortal combat to determine the baseball championship of the world, and I'm three thousand miles away!"

"Oh," said Miss Paris. Then she said cleverly: "You poor darling."

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"Never missed a New York series before," wailed Mr. Queen. "Driving me cuckoo. And what a battle! Greatest series ever played. Moore and DiMaggio have done miracles in the outfield. Giants have pulled a triple play. Goofy Gomez struck out fourteen men to win the first game. Hubbell's pitched a one-hit shutout. And to-day Dickey came up in the ninth innings with the bases loaded, two out, and the Yanks three runs behind, and slammed a homer over the right-field stands!"

"Is that good?" asked Miss Paris.

"Good!" howled Mr. Queen. "It *merely* sent the series into a seventh game."

"Poor darling," said Miss Paris again, and she picked up her telephone. When she set it down she said: "Weather's threatening in the East. To-morrow the New York Weather Bureau expects heavy rains."

Mr. Queen stared wildly. "You mean——"

"I mean that you're taking to-night's plane for the East. And you'll see your beloved seventh game day after to-morrow."

"Paula, you're a genius!" Then Mr. Queen's face fell. "But the studio, tickets . . . *Bigre!* I'll tell the studio I'm down with elephantiasis, and I'll wire Dad to snare a box. With his pull at City Hall, he ought to—Paula, I don't know what I'd do . . ."

"You might", suggested Miss Paris, "kiss me . . . good-bye."

Mr. Queen did so, absently. Then he started. "Not at all! You're coming with me!"

"That's what I had in mind," said Miss Paris contentedly.

And so Wednesday found Miss Paris and Mr. Queen at the Polo Grounds, ensconced in a field box behind the Yankees' dugout.

Mr. Queen glowed, he revelled, he was radiant. While Inspector Queen, with the suspiciousness of all fathers, engaged Paula in exploratory conversation, Ellery filled his lap and Paula's with peanut hulls, consumed frankfurters and soda pop immoderately, made hypercritical comments on the appearance of the various athletes, derided the Yankees, extolled



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the Giants, evolved complicated fifty-cent bets with Detective-Sergeant Velie, of the Inspector's staff, and leaped to his feet screaming with fifty thousand other maniacs as the news came that Carl Hubbell, the beloved Meal Ticket of the Giants, would oppose Señor El Goofy Gomez, the ace of the Yankee staff, on the mound.

"Will the Yanks murder that apple to-day!" predicted the Sergeant, who was an incurable Yankee worshipper. "And will Goofy mow 'em down!"

"Four bits", said Mr. Queen coldly, "say the Yanks don't score three earned runs off Carl."

"It's a pleasure!"

"I'll take a piece of that, Sergeant," chuckled a handsome man to the front of them, in a rail seat. "Hi, Inspector. Swell day for it, eh?"

"Jimmy Connor!" exclaimed Inspector Queen. "The old Song-and-Dance Man in person. Say, Jimmy, you never met my son Ellery, did you? Excuse me. Miss Paris, this is the famous Jimmy Connor, God's gift to Broadway."

"Glad to meet you, Miss Paris," smiled the Song-and-Dance Man, sniffing at his orchidaceous lapel. "Read your 'Seeing Stars' column, every day. Meet Judy Starr."

Miss Paris smiled, and the woman beside Jimmy Connor smiled back, and just then three Yankee players strolled over to the box and began to jeer at Connor for having had to take seats behind the hated Yankee dugout.

Judy Starr was sitting oddly still. She was the famous Judy Starr who had been discovered by Florenz Ziegfeld—a second Marilyn Miller, the critics called her; dainty and pretty, with a perky profile and great honey-coloured eyes, who had sung and danced her way into the heart of New York. Her day of fame was almost over now. Perhaps, thought Paula, staring at Judy's profile, that explained the pinch of her little mouth, the fine lines about her tragic eyes, the singing tension of her figure.

Perhaps. But Paula was not sure. There was immediacy, a defence against a palpable and present danger, in Judy Starr's tautness. Paula looked about. And at once her eyes narrowed.

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Across the rail of the box, in the box at their left, sat a very tall, leather-skinned, silent and intent man. The man, too, was staring out at the field, in an attitude curiously like that of Judy Starr, whom he could have touched by extending his big, ropy, muscular hand across the rail. And on the man's other side there sat a woman whom Paula recognized instantly. Lotus Verne, the motion-picture actress!

Lotus Verne was a gorgeous, full-blown redhead with deep mercury-coloured eyes who had come out of Northern Italy Ludovica Vernicchi, changed her name, and flashed across the Hollywood skies in a picture called *Woman of Bah*, a colour-film in which loving care had been lavished on the display possibilities of her dark, full, dangerous body. With fame, she had developed a passion for press-agentry, borzois in pairs, and tall brown men with muscles. She was arrayed in sun-yellow, and she stood out among the women in the field boxes like a butterfly in a mass of grubs. By contrast little Judy Starr, in her flame-coloured outfit, looked almost old and dowdy.

Paula nudged Ellery, who was critically watching the Yankees at batting practice. "Ellery," she said softly, "who is that big, brown, attractive man in the next box?"

Lotus Verne said something to the brown man, and suddenly Judy Starr said something to the Song-and-Dance Man; and then the two women exchanged the kind of glance women use when there is no knife handy.

Ellery said absently: "Who? Oh! That's Big Bill Tree."

"Tree?" repeated Paula. "Big Bill Tree?"

"Greatest left-handed pitcher major-league baseball ever saw," said Mr. Queen, staring reverently at the brown man. "Six feet three inches of bull-whip and muscle, with a temper as sudden as the hook on his curve ball and a change of pace that fooled the greatest sluggers of baseball for fifteen years. What a man!"

"Yes, isn't he?" smiled Miss Paris.

"Now what does that mean?" demanded Mr. Queen.

"It takes greatness to escort a lady like Lotus Verne to a ball game," said Paula, "to find your wife sitting within spitting distance in the next box, and to carry it off as well as your muscular friend Mr. Tree is doing."

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"That's right," said Mr. Queen softly. "Judy Starr is Mrs. Bill Tree."

He groaned as Joe DiMaggio hit a ball to the clubhouse clock.

"Funny," said Miss Paris, her clever eyes inspecting in turn the four people before her: Lotus Verne, the Hollywood siren; Big Bill Tree, the ex-baseball pitcher; Judy Starr, Tree's wife; and Jimmy Connor, the Song-and-Dance Man, Mrs. Tree's escort. Two couples, two boxes . . . and no sign of recognition. "Funny," murmured Miss Paris. "From the way Tree courted Judy you'd have thought the marriage would outlast eternity. He snatched her from under Jimmy Connor's nose one night at the Winter Garden, drove her up to Greenwich at eighty miles an hour, and married her before she could catch her breath."

"Yes," said Mr. Queen politely. "Come on, you Giants!" he yelled, as the Giants trotted out for batting practice.

"And then something happened," continued Miss Paris reflectively. "Tree went to Hollywood to make a baseball picture, met Lotus Verne, and the wench took the overgrown country boy the way the overgrown country boy had taken Judy Starr. What a fall was there, my baseball-minded friend."

"What a wallop!" cried Mr. Queen enthusiastically, as Mel Ott hit one that bounced off the right-field fence.

"And Big Bill yammered for a divorce, and Judy refused to give it to him because she loved him, I suppose," said Paula softly—"and now this. How interesting."

Big Bill Tree twisted in his seat a little; and Judy Starr was still and pale, staring out of her tragic, honey-coloured eyes at the Yankee bat-boy and giving him unwarranted delusions of grandeur. Jimmy Connor continued to exchange sarcastic greetings with Yankee players, but his eyes kept shifting back to Judy's face. And beautiful Lotus Verne's arm crept about Tree's shoulders.

"I don't like it," murmured Miss Paris a little later.

"You don't like it?" said Mr. Queen. "Why, the game hasn't even started."

"I don't mean your game, silly. I mean the quadrangular situation in front of us."

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"Look, darling," said Mr. Queen. "I flew three thousand miles to see a ball game. There's only one angle that interests me—the view from this box of the greatest li'l ol' baseball tussle within the memory of gaffers. I yearn, I strain, I hunger to see it. Play with your quadrangle, but leave me to my baseball."

"I've always been psychic," said Miss Paris, paying no attention. "This is—bad. Something's going to happen."

Mr. Queen grinned. "I know what. The deluge. See what's coming."

Someone in the grandstand had recognized the celebrities, and a sea of people was rushing down on the two boxes. They swamped the aisle behind the boxes, bobbing pencils and papers, and pleading. Big Bill Tree and Lotus Verne ignored their pleas for autographs; but Judy Starr with a curious eagerness signed paper after paper with the yellow pencils thrust at her by people leaning over the rail. Good-naturedly Jimmy Connor scrawled his signature, too.

"Little Judy", sighed Miss Paris, setting her natural straw straight as an autograph-hunter knocked it over her eyes, "is flustered and unhappy. Moistening the tip of your pencil with your tongue is scarcely a mark of poise. Seated next to her Lotus-bound husband, she hardly knows what she's doing, poor thing."

"Neither do I," growled Mr. Queen, fending off an octopus which turned out to be eight pleading arms offering score-cards.

Big Bill sneezed, groped for a handkerchief, and held it to his nose, which was red and swollen. "Hey, Mac," he called irritably to a red-coated usher. "Do somethin' about this mob, huh?" He sneezed again. "Damn this hay-fever!"

"The touch of earth," said Miss Paris. "But definitely attractive."

"Should 'a' seen Big Bill the day he pitched that World Series final against the Tigers," chuckled Sergeant Velie. "He was sure attractive that day. Pitched a no-hit shutout!"

Inspector Queen said: "Ever hear the story behind that final game, Miss Paris? The night before, a gambler named Sure Shot McCoy, who represented a betting syndicate, called on

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Big Bill and laid down fifty grand in spot cash in return for Bill's promise to throw the next day's game. Bill took the money, told his manager the whole story, donated the bribe to a fund for sick ball players, and the next day shut out the Tigers without a hit."

"Byronic, too," murmured Miss Paris.

"So then Sure Shot, badly bent," grinned the Inspector, "called on Bill for the payoff. Bill knocked him down two flights of stairs."

"Wasn't that dangerous?"

"I guess", smiled the Inspector, "you could say so. That's why you see that plug-ugly with the smashed nose sitting over there right behind Tree's box. He's Mr. Terrible Turk, late of Cicero, and since that night Big Bill's shadow. You don't see Mr. Turk's right hand, because Mr. Turk's right hand is holding on to an automatic under his jacket. You'll notice, too, that Mr. Turk hasn't for a second taken his eyes off that pasty-cheeked customer eight rows up, whose name is Sure Shot McCoy."

Paula stared. "But what a silly thing for Tree to do!"

"Well, yes," drawled Inspector Queen, "seeing that when he popped Mr. McCoy Big Bill snapped two of the carpal bones of his pitching wrist and wrote finis to his baseball career."

Big Bill Tree hauled himself to his feet, whispered something to the Verne woman, who smiled coyly, and left his box. His bodyguard, Turk, jumped up; but the big man shook his head, waved aside a crowd of people, and vaulted up the concrete steps towards the rear of the grandstand.

And then Judy Starr said something bitter and hot and desperate across the rail to the woman her husband had brought to the Polo Grounds. Lotus Verne's mercurial eyes glittered, and she replied in a careless, insulting voice that made Bill Tree's wife sit up stiffly. Jimmy Connor began to tell the one about Walter Winchell and the Seven Dwarfs . . . loudly and fast.

The Verne woman began to paint her rich lips with short, vicious strokes of her orange lipstick; and Judy Starr's flame kid glove tightened on the rail between them.

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And after a while Big Bill returned and sat down again. Judy said something to Jimmy Connor, and the Song-and-Dance Man slid over one seat to his right, and Judy slipped into Connor's seat; so that between her and her husband there was now not only the box rail but an empty chair as well.

Lotus Verne put her arm about Tree's shoulders again.

Tree's wife fumbled inside her flame suède bag. She said suddenly: "Jimmy, buy me a frankfurter."

Connor ordered a dozen. Big Bill scowled. He jumped up and ordered some, too. Connor tossed the vendor two one-dollar bills and waved him away.

A new sea deluged the two boxes, and Tree turned round, annoyed. "All right, all right, Mac," he growled at the red-coat struggling with the pressing mob. "We don't want a riot here. I'll take six. Just six. Let's have 'em."

There was a rush that almost upset the attendant. The rail behind the boxes was a solid line of fluttering hands, arms, and scorecards.

"Mr. Tree—said—six!" panted the usher; and he grabbed a pencil and card from one of the outstretched hands and gave them to Tree. The overflow of pleaders spread to the next box. Judy Starr smiled her best professional smile and reached for a pencil and card. A group of players on the field, seeing what was happening, ran over to the field rail and handed her scorecards, too, so that she had to set her half-consumed frankfurter down on the empty seat beside her. Big Bill set his frankfurter down on the same empty seat; he licked the pencil long and absently and began to inscribe his name in the stiff, laborious hand of a man unused to writing.

The attendant howled: "That's six, now! Mr. Tree said just six, so that's all!" as if God Himself had said six; and the crowd groaned, and Big Bill waved his immense paw and reached over to the empty seat in the other box to lay hold of his half-eaten frankfurter. But his wife's hand got there first and fumbled round; and it came up with Tree's frankfurter. The big brown man almost spoke to her then; but he did not, and he picked up the remaining frankfurter, stuffed it into his mouth, and chewed away, but not as if he enjoyed its taste.

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Mr. Ellery Queen was looking at the four people before him with a puzzled, worried expression. Then he caught Miss Paula Paris's amused glance and blushed angrily.

The groundkeepers had just left the field and the senior umpire was dusting off the plate to the roar of the crowd when Lotus Verne, who thought a double play was something by Eugene O'Neill, flashed a strange look at Big Bill Tree.

"Bill! Don't you feel well?"

The big ex-pitcher, a sickly blue beneath his tanned skin, put his hand to his eyes and shook his head as if to clear it.

"It's that hot dog," snapped Lotus. "No more for you!"

Tree blinked and began to say something, but just then Carl Hubbell completed his warming-up, Crosetti marched to the plate, Harry Danning tossed the ball to his second-baseman, who flipped it to Hubbell and trotted back to his position yipping like a terrier.

The voice of the crowd exploded in one ear-splitting burst. And then silence.

And Crosetti swung at the first ball Hubbell pitched and smashed it far over Joe Moore's head for a triple.

Jimmy Connor gasped as if someone had thrust a knife into his heart. But Detective-Sergeant Velie was bellowing: "What'd I tell you? It's gonna be a massacre!"

"What is everyone shouting for?" asked Paula.

Mr. Queen nibbled his nails as Danning strolled halfway to the pitcher's box. But Hubbell pulled his long pants up, grinning. Red Rolfe was waving a huge bat at the plate. Danning trotted back. Manager Bill Terry had one foot up on the edge of the Giant dugout, his chin on his fist, looking anxious. The infield came in to cut off the run.

Again fifty thousand people made no single little sound.

And Hubbell struck out Rolfe, DiMaggio, and Gehrig.

Mr. Queen shrieked his joy with the thousands as the Giants came whooping in. Jimmy Connor did an Indian war dance in the box. Sergeant Velie looked aggrieved. Señor Gomez took his warm-up pitches, the umpire used his whiskbroom on the plate again, and Jo-Jo Moore, the Thin Man, ambled up with his war club.

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He walked. Bartell fanned. But Jeep Ripple singled off Flash Gordon's shins on the first pitch; and there were Moore on third and Ripple on first, one out, and Little Mel Ott at bat.

Big Bill Tree got half out of his seat, looking surprised, and then dropped to the concrete floor of the box as if somebody had slammed him behind the ear with a fast ball.

Lotus screamed. Judy, Bill's wife, turned like a shot, shaking. People in the vicinity jumped up. Three red-coated attendants hurried down, preceded by the hard-looking Mr. Turk. The bench-warmers stuck their heads over the edge of the Yankee dugout to stare.

"Fainted," growled Turk, on his knees beside the prostrate athlete.

"Loosen his collar," moaned Lotus Verne. "He's so p-pale!"

"Have to git him outa here."

"Yes. Oh, yes!"

The attendants and Turk lugged the big man off, long arms dangling in the oddest way. Lotus stumbled along beside him, biting her lips nervously.

"I think . . ." began Judy in a quivering voice, rising.

But Jimmy Connor put his hand on her arm, and she sank back.

And in the next box Mr. Ellery Queen, on his feet from the instant Tree collapsed, kept looking after the forlorn procession, puzzled, mad about something; until somebody in the stands squawked: "SIDDOWN!" and he sat down.

"Oh, I knew something would happen," whispered Paula.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Queen shortly. "Fainted, that's all."

Inspector Queen said: "There's Sure Shot McCoy not far off. I wonder if——"

"Too many hot dogs," snapped his son. "What's the matter with you people? Can't I see my ball game in peace?" And he howled: "Come o-o-on, Mel!"

Ott lifted his right leg into the sky and swung. The ball whistled into right field, a long long fly, Selkirk racing madly back after it. He caught it by leaping four feet into the air with his back against the barrier. Moore was off for the plate like a streak and beat the throw to Bill Dickey by inches.

"Yip-ee!" Thus Mr. Queen.



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The Giants trotted out to their positions at the end of the first innings leading one to nothing.

Up in the press box the working gentlemen of the press tore into their chores, recalling Carl Hubbell's similar feat in the All-Star game when he struck out the five greatest batters of the American League in succession; praising Twinkletoe Selkirk, for his circus catch; and incidentally noting that Big Bill Tree, famous ex-hurler of the National League, had fainted in a field box during the first innings. Joe Williams of the *World-Telegram* said it was excitement, Hype Igoe opined that it was a touch of sun—Big Bill never wore a hat—and Frank Graham of the *Sun* guessed it was too many frankfurters.

Paula Paris said quietly: "I should think, with your detective instincts, Mr. Queen, you would seriously question the 'fainting' of Mr. Tree."

Mr. Queen squirmed and finally mumbled: "It's coming to a pretty pass when a man's instincts aren't his own. Velie, go see what really happened to him."

"I wanna watch the game," howled Velie. "Why don't you go yourself, Maestro?"

"And possibly", said Mr. Queen, "you ought to go too, Dad. I have a hunch it may lie in your jurisdiction."

Inspector Queen regarded his son for some time. Then he rose and sighed: "Come along, Thomas."

Sergeant Velie growled something about some people always spoiling other people's fun and why the hell did he ever have to become a cop; but he got up and obediently followed the Inspector.

Mr. Queen nibbled his fingernails and avoided Miss Paris's accusing eyes.

The second innings was uneventful. Neither side scored.

As the Giants took the field again, an usher came running down the concrete steps and whispered into Jim Connor's ear. The Song-and-Dance Man blinked. He rose slowly. "Excuse me, Judy."

Judy grasped the rail. "It's Bill. Jimmy, tell me."

"Now, Judy—"

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"Something's happened to Bill!" Her voice shrilled, and then broke. She jumped up. "I'm going with you."

Connor smiled as if he had just lost a bet, and then he took Judy's arm and hurried her away.

Paula Paris stared after them, breathing hard.

Mr. Queen beckoned the redcoat. "What's the trouble?" he demanded.

"Mr. Tree passed out. Some young doc in the crowd tried to pull him out of it up at the office, but he couldn't, and he's startin' to look worried——"

"I knew it!" cried Paula as the man darted away. "Ellery Queen, are you going to sit here and do *nothing*?"

But Mr. Queen defiantly set his jaw. Nobody was going to jockey him out of seeing this battle of giants; no, ma'am!

There were two men out when Frank Crosetti stepped up to the plate for his second time at bat, and, with the count two all, plastered a wicked single over Ott's head.

And, of course, Sergeant Velie took just that moment to amble down and say, his eyes on the field: "Better come along, Master Mind. The old man wouldst have a word with thou. Ah, I see Frankie's on first. Smack it, Red!"

Mr. Queen watched Rolfe take a ball. "Well?" he said shortly. Paula's lips were parted.

"Big Bill's just kicked the bucket. What happened in the second innings?"

"He's . . . *dead*?" gasped Paula.

Mr. Queen rose involuntarily. Then he sat down again. "Damn it," he roared, "it isn't fair. I won't go!"

"Suit yourself. Attaboy, Rolfe!" bellowed the Sergeant as Rolfe singled sharply past Bartell and Crosetti pulled up at second base. "Far's I'm concerned, it's open and shut. The little woman did it with her own little hands."

"Judy *Starr*?" said Miss Paris.

"Bill's wife?" said Mr. Queen. "What are you talking about?"

"That's right, little Judy. She poisoned his hot dog." Velie chuckled. "Man bites dog, and—zowie."

"Has she confessed?" snapped Mr. Queen.

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"Naw. But you know dames. She gave Bill the business, all right. C'mon, Joe! And I gotta go. What a life."

Mr. Queen did not look at Miss Paris. He bit his lip. "Here, Velie, wait a minute."

DiMaggio hit a long fly that Leiber caught without moving in his tracks, and the Yankees were retired without a score.

"Ah," said Mr. Queen. "Good old Hubbell." And as the Giants trotted in, he took a fat roll of bills from his pocket, climbed on to his seat, and began waving greenbacks at the spectators in the reserved seats behind the box. Sergeant Velie and Miss Paris stared at him in amazement.

"I'll give five bucks", yelled Mr. Queen, waving the money, "for every autograph Bill Tree signed before the game! In this box right here! Five bucks, gentlemen! Come and get it!"

"You nuts?" gasped the Sergeant.

The mob gaped, and then began to laugh, and after a few moments a pair of sheepish-looking men came down, and then two more, and finally a fifth. An attendant ran over to find out what was the matter.

"Are you the usher who handled the crowd around Bill Tree's box before the game, when he was giving autographs?" demanded Mr. Queen.

"Yes, sir. But, look, we can't allow——"

"Take a gander at these five men . . . You, bud? Yes, that's Tree's handwriting. Here's your fin. Next!" and Mr. Queen went down the line, handing out five-dollar bills with abandon in return for five dirty scorecards with Tree's scrawl on them.

"Anybody else?" he called out, waving his roll of bills.

But nobody else appeared, although there was ungentle badinage from the stands. Sergeant Velie stood there shaking his big head. Miss Paris looked intensely curious.

"Who didn't come down?" rapped Mr. Queen.

"Huh?" said the usher, his mouth open.

"There were six autographs. Only five people turned up. Who was the sixth man? Speak up!"

"Oh." The redcoat scratched his ear. "Say, it wasn't a man. It was a kid."

"A boy?"

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"Yeah, a little squirt in knee-pants."

Mr. Queen looked unhappy. Velie growled: "Sometimes I think society's takin' an awful chance lettin' you run around loose," and the two men left the box. Miss Paris, bright-eyed, followed.

"Have to clear this mess up in a hurry," muttered Mr. Queen. "Maybe we'll still be able to catch the late innings."

Sergeant Velie led the way to an office, before which a policeman was lounging. He opened the door, and inside they found the Inspector pacing. Turk, the thug, was standing with a scowl over a long still thing on a couch covered with newspapers. Jimmy Connor sat between the two women; and none of the three so much as stirred a foot. They were all pale and breathing heavily.

"This is Dr. Fielding," said Inspector Queen, indicating an elderly white-haired man standing quietly by a window. "He was Tree's physician. He happened to be in the park watching the game when the rumour reached his ears that Tree had collapsed. So he hurried up here to see what he could do."

Ellery went to the couch and pulled the newspaper off Bill Tree's still head. Paula crossed swiftly to Judy Starr and said: "I'm horribly sorry, Mrs. Tree," but the woman, her eyes closed, did not move. After a while Ellery dropped the newspaper back into place and said irritably: "Well, well, let's have it."

"A young doctor", said the Inspector, "got here before Dr. Fielding did, and treated Tree for fainting. I guess it was his fault——"

"Not at all," said Dr. Fielding sharply. "The early picture was compatible with fainting, from what he told me. He tried the usual restorative methods—even injected caffeine and picrotoxin. But there was no convulsion, and he didn't happen to catch that odour of bitter almonds."

"Prussic!" said Ellery. "Taken orally?"

"Yes. HCN—hydrocyanic acid, or prussic, as you prefer. I suspected it at once because—well," said Dr. Fielding in a grim voice, "because of something that occurred in my office only the other day."

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"What was that?"

"I had a two-ounce bottle of hydrocyanic acid on my desk—I sometimes use it in minute quantities as a cardiac stimulant. Mrs. Tree", the doctor's glance flickered over the silent woman, "happened to be in my office, resting in preparation for a metabolism test. I left her alone. By a coincidence, Bill Tree dropped in the same morning for a physical check-up. I saw another patient in another room, returned, gave Mrs. Tree her test, saw her out, and came back with Tree. It was then I noticed the bottle, which had been plainly marked DANGER—POISON, was missing from my desk. I thought I had mislaid it, but now . . ."

"I didn't take it," said Judy Starr in a lifeless voice, still not opening her eyes. "I never even saw it."

The Song-and-Dance Man took her limp hand and gently stroked it.

"No hypo marks on the body," said Dr. Fielding dryly. "And I am told that fifteen to thirty minutes before Tree collapsed he ate a frankfurter under . . . peculiar conditions."

"I didn't!" screamed Judy. "I didn't do it!" She pressed her face, sobbing, against Connor's orchid.

Lotus Verne quivered. "She made him pick up her frankfurter. I saw it. They both laid their frankfurters down on that empty seat, and she picked up his. So he had to pick up hers. She poisoned her own frankfurter and then saw to it that he ate it by mistake. Poisoner!" She glared hate at Judy.

"Wench," said Miss Paris *sotto voce*, glaring hate at Lotus.

"In other words," put in Ellery impatiently, "Miss Starr is convicted on the usual two counts, motive and opportunity. Motive—her jealousy of Miss Verne and her hatred—an assumption—of Bill Tree, her husband. And opportunity both to lay hands on the poison in your office, Doctor, and to sprinkle some on her frankfurter, contriving to exchange hers for his while they were both autographing scorecards."

"She hated him," snarled Lotus. "And me for having taken him from her!"

"Be quiet, you," said Mr. Queen. He opened the corridor door and said to the policeman outside: "Look, McGillicuddy, or whatever your name is, go tell the announcer to make a

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speech over the loudspeaker system. By the way, what's the score now?"

"Still one to skunk," said the officer. "Them boys Hubbell an' Gomez are hot, what I mean."

"The announcer is to ask the little boy who got Bill Tree's autograph just before the game to come to this office. If he does, he'll receive a ball, bat, pitcher's glove, and an autographed picture of Tree in uniform to hang over his itty-bitsy bed. Scram!"

"Yes, *sir*," said the officer.

"King Carl pitching his heart out," grumbled Mr. Queen, shutting the door, "and me strangulated by this blamed thing. Well, Dad, do you think, too, that Judy Starr dosed that frankfurter?"

"What else can I think?" said the Inspector absently. His ears were cocked for the faint crowd-shouts from the park.

"Judy Starr", replied his son, "didn't poison her husband any more than I did."

Judy looked up slowly, her mouth muscles twitching. Paula said, gladly: "You wonderful man!"

"She didn't?" said the Inspector, looking alert.

"The frankfurter theory", snapped Mr. Queen, "is too screwy for words. For Judy to have poisoned her husband, she had to unscrew the cap of a bottle and douse her hot dog on the spot with the hydrocyanic acid. Yet Jimmy Connor was seated by her side, and in the only period in which she could possibly have poisoned the frankfurter a group of Yankee ball players was *standing before her* across the field rail getting her autograph. Were they all accomplices? And how could she have known Big Bill would lay his hot dog on that empty seat? The whole thing is absurd."

A roar from the stands made him continue hastily: "There was one plausible theory that fitted the facts. When I heard that Tree had died of poisoning, I recalled that at the time he was autographing the six scorecards, *he had thoroughly licked the end of a pencil* which had been handed to him with one of the cards. It was possible, then, that the pencil he licked had been poisoned. So I offered to buy the six autographs."

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Paula regarded him tenderly, and Velie said: "I'll be a so-and-so if he didn't."

"I didn't expect the poisoner to come forward, but I knew the innocent ones would. Five claimed the money. The sixth, the missing one, the usher informed me, had been a small boy."

"A kid poisoned Bill?" growled Turk, speaking for the first time. "You're crazy from the heat."

"In spades," added the Inspector.

"Then why didn't the boy come forward?" put in Paula quickly. "Go on, darling!"

"He didn't come forward, not because he was guilty but because he wouldn't sell Bill Tree's autograph for anything. No, obviously a hero-worshipping boy wouldn't try to poison the great Bill Tree. Then, just as obviously, he didn't realize what he was doing. Consequently, he must have been an innocent tool. The question was—and still is—of whom?"

"Sure Shot," said the Inspector slowly.

Lotus Verne sprang to her feet, her eyes glittering. "Perhaps Judy Starr didn't poison that frankfurter, but if she didn't then she hired that boy to give Bill——"

Mr. Queen said disdainfully: "Miss Starr didn't leave the box once." Someone knocked on the corridor door and he opened it. For the first time he smiled. When he shut the door they saw that his arm was about the shoulders of a boy with brown hair and quick clever eyes. The boy was clutching a scorecard tightly.

"They say over the announcer", mumbled the boy, "that I'll get a autographed pi'ture of Big Bill Tree if . . ." He stopped, abashed at their strangely glinting eyes.

"And you'll certainly get it, too," said Mr. Queen heartily. "What's your name, Sonny?"

"Fenimore Feigenspan," replied the boy, edging towards the door. "Gran' Concourse, Bronx. Here's the scorecard. How about the pi'ture?"

"Let's see that, Fenimore," said Mr. Queen. "When did Bill Tree give you this autograph?"

"Before the game. He said he'd on'y give six——"

"Where's the pencil you handed him, Fenimore?"

The boy looked suspicious, but he dug into a bulging pocket

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and brought forth one of the ordinary yellow pencils sold at the park with scorecards. Ellery took it from him gingerly, and Dr. Fielding took it from Ellery, and sniffed its tip. He nodded, and for the first time a look of peace came over Judy Starr's still face and she dropped her head tiredly to Connor's shoulder.

Mr. Queen ruffled Fenimore Feigenspan's hair. "That's swell, Fenimore. Somebody gave you that pencil while the Giants were at batting practice, isn't that so?"

"Yeah." The boy stared at him.

"Who was it?" asked Mr. Queen lightly.

"I dunno. A big guy with a coat an' a turned-down hat an' a moustache, an' big black sun-glasses. I couldn't see his face good. Where's my pi'ture? I wanna see the game!"

"Just where was it that this man gave you the pencil?"

"In the——" Fenimore paused, glancing at the ladies with embarrassment. Then he muttered: "Well, I hadda go, an' this guy says—in there—he's ashamed to ask her for her autograph, so would I do it for him——"

"What? What's that?" exclaimed Mr. Queen. "Did you say 'her'?"

"Sure," said Fenimore. "The dame, he says, wearin' the red hat an' red dress an' red gloves in the field box near the Yanks' dugout, he says. He even took me outside an' pointed down to where she was sittin'. Say!" cried Fenimore, goggling. "That's her! That's the dame!" and he levelled a grimy forefinger at Judy Starr.

Judy shivered and felt blindly for the Song-and-Dance Man's hand.

"Let me get this straight, Fenimore," said Mr. Queen softly. "This man with the sun-glasses asked you to get this lady's autograph for him, and gave you the pencil and scorecard to get it with?"

"Yeah, an' two bucks too, sayin' he'd meet me after the game to pick up the card, but——"

"But you didn't get the lady's autograph for him, did you? You went down to get it, and hung around waiting for your chance, but then you spied Big Bill Tree, your hero, in the next box and forgot all about the lady, didn't you?"



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The boy shrank back. "I didn't mean to, honest, Mister. I'll give the two bucks back!"

"And seeing Big Bill there, your hero, you went right over to get *his* autograph for *yourself*, didn't you?" Fenimore nodded, frightened. "You gave the usher the pencil and scorecard this man with the sun-glasses had handed you, and the usher turned the pencil and scorecard over to Bill Tree in the box—wasn't that the way it happened?"

"Y-yes, sir, an' . . ." Fenimore twisted out of Ellery's grasp, "an' so I—I gotta go." And before anyone could stop him he was indeed gone, racing down the corridor like the wind.

The policeman outside shouted, but Ellery said: "Let him go, officer," and shut the door. Then he opened it again and said: "How's she stand now?"

"Dunno exactly, sir. Somethin' happened out there just now. I think the Yanks scored."

"Damn," groaned Mr. Queen, and he shut the door again.

"So it was Mrs. Tree who was on the spot, not Bill," scowled the Inspector. "I'm sorry, Judy Starr . . . Big man with a coat and hat and moustache and sun-glasses. Some description!"

"Sounds like a phony to me," said Sergeant Velie.

"If it was a disguise, he dumped it somewhere," said the Inspector thoughtfully. "Thomas, have a look in the Men's Room behind the section where we were sitting. And Thomas," he added in a whisper, "find out what the score is." Velie grinned and hurried out. Inspector Queen frowned. "Quite a job finding a killer in a crowd of fifty thousand people."

"Maybe," said his son suddenly, "maybe it's not such a job after all. . . . What was used to kill? Hydrocyanic acid. Who was intended to be killed? Bill Tree's wife. Any connection between anyone in the case and hydrocyanic acid? Yes—Dr. Fielding 'lost' a bottle of it under suspicious circumstances. Which were? That Bill Tree's wife could have taken that bottle . . . or *Bill Tree himself*."

"Bill Tree!" gasped Paula.

"Bill?" whispered Judy Starr.

"Quite! Dr. Fielding didn't miss the bottle until *after* he had shown you, Miss Starr, out of his office. He then returned to

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his office with your husband. Bill could have slipped the bottle into his pocket as he stepped into the room."

"Yes, he could have," muttered Dr. Fielding.

"I don't see", said Mr. Queen, "how we can arrive at any other conclusion. We know his wife was intended to be the victim to-day, so obviously she didn't steal the poison. The only other person who had opportunity to steal it was Bill himself."

The Verne woman sprang up. "I don't believe it! It's a frame-up to protect *her*, now that Bill can't defend himself!"

"Ah, but didn't he have motive to kill Judy?" asked Mr. Queen. "Yes, indeed; she wouldn't give him the divorce he craved so that he could marry *you*. I think, Miss Verne, you would be wiser to keep the peace. . . . Bill had opportunity to steal the bottle of poison in Dr. Fielding's office. He also had opportunity to hire Fenimore to-day, for he was the *only* one of the whole group who left those two boxes during the period when the poisoner must have searched for someone to offer Judy the poisoned pencil.

"All of which fits for what Bill had to do—get to where he had cached his disguise, probably yesterday; look for a likely tool; find Fenimore, give him his instructions and the pencil; get rid of the disguise again; and return to his box. And didn't Bill know better than anyone his wife's habit of moistening a pencil with her tongue—a habit she probably acquired from *him*?"

"Poor Bill," murmured Judy Starr brokenly.

"Women", remarked Miss Paris, "are *fools*."

"There were other striking ironies," replied Mr. Queen. "For if Bill hadn't been suffering from a hay-fever attack, he would have smelled the odour of bitter almonds when his own poisoned pencil was handed to him and stopped in time to save his worthless life. For that matter, if he hadn't been Fenimore Feigenspan's hero, Fenimore would not have handed him his own poisoned pencil in the first place.

"No," said Mr. Queen gladly, "putting it all together, I'm satisfied that Mr. Big Bill Tree, in trying to murder his wife, very neatly murdered himself instead."

"That's all very well for *you*," said the Inspector disconsolately. "But *I* need proof."

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"I've told you how it happened," said his son airily, making for the door. "Can any man do more? Coming, Paula?"

But Paula was already at a telephone, speaking guardedly to the New York office of the syndicate for which she worked, and paying no more attention to him than if he had been a worm.

"What's the score? What's been going on?" Ellery demanded of the world at large as he regained his box seat. "Three to three! What the devil's got into Hubbell, anyway? How'd the Yanks score? What innings is it?"

"Last of the ninth," shrieked somebody. "The Yanks got three runs in the eighth on a walk, a double, and DiMag's homer! Danning homered in the sixth with Ott on base! Shut up!"

Bartell singled over Gordon's head. Mr. Queen cheered.

Sergeant Velie tumbled into the next seat. "Well, we got it," he puffed. "Found the whole outfit in the Men's Room—coat, hat, fake moustache, glasses and all. What's the score?"

"Three-three. Sacrifice, Jeep!" shouted Mr. Queen.

"There was a rain-check in the coat pocket from the sixth game, with Big Bill's box number on it. So there's the old man's proof. Chalk up another win for you."

"Who cares? . . . *Zowie!*"

Jeep Ripple sacrificed Bartell successfully to second.

"Lucky stiff," howled a Yankee fan near by. "That's the breaks. See the breaks they get? See?"

"And another thing," said the Sergeant, watching Mel Ott stride to the plate. "Seein' as how all Big Bill did was cross himself up, and no harm done except to his own carcass, and seein' as how organized baseball could get along without a murder, and seein' as how thousands of kids like Fenimore Feigenspan worship the ground he walked on——"

"Sew it up, Mel!" bellowed Mr. Queen.

"—and seein' as how none of the newspaper guys know what happened, except that Bill passed out of the picture after a faint, and seein' as everybody's only too glad to shut their traps——"

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Mr. Queen awoke suddenly to the serious matters of life. "What's that? What did you say?"

"Strike him out, Goofy!" roared the Sergeant to Señor Gomez, who did not hear. "As I was sayin', it ain't cricket, and the old man would be broke out of the force if the big cheese heard about it . . ."

Someone puffed up behind them, and they turned to see Inspector Queen, red-faced as if after a hard run, scrambling into the box with the assistance of Miss Paula Paris, who looked cool, serene, and star-eyed as ever.

"Dad!" said Mr. Queen, staring. "With a murder on your hands, how can you——"

"Murder?" panted Inspector Queen. "What murder?" And he winked at Miss Paris, who winked back.

"But Paula was telephoning the story——"

"Didn't you hear?" said Paula in a coo, setting her straw straight and slipping into the seat beside Ellery's. "I fixed it all up with your Dad. To-night all the world will know is that Mr. Bill Tree died of heart failure."

They all chuckled then—all but Mr. Queen, whose mouth was open.

"So now", said Paula, "your Dad can see the finish of your precious game just as well as *you*, you selfish oaf!"

But Mr. Queen was already fiercely rapt in contemplation of Mel Ott's bat as it swung back and Señor Gomez's ball as it left the Señor's hand to streak towards the plate.

# THE LOSS OF SAMMY THROCKETT

BY

ARTHUR MORRISON

*from Martin Hewitt, Investigator*

MARTIN HEWITT ON THE TRAIL OF A KIDNAPPED RUNNER

It was, of course, always a part of Martin Hewitt's business to be thoroughly at home among any and every class of people, and to be able to interest himself intelligently in their various pursuits. In one of the most important cases ever placed in his hands he could have gone but a short way towards success had he not displayed some knowledge of the more sordid aspects of professional sport, and a great interest in the undertakings of a certain dealer therein.

The man who alone held the one piece of information Hewitt wanted was a keeper, backer, or "gaffer" of professional pedestrians, and it was through the medium of his pecuniary interest in such matters that Hewitt was enabled to strike a bargain with him.

The man was a publican on the outskirts of Padfield, a northern town pretty famous for its sporting tastes, and to Padfield, therefore, Hewitt betook himself, and, arrayed in a way to indicate some inclination of his own towards sport, he began to frequent the bar of the Hare and Hounds. Kentish, the landlord, was a stout, bull-necked man, of no great communicativeness at first; but after a little acquaintance he opened out wonderfully, became quite a jolly (and rather intelligent) companion, and came out with innumerable anecdotes of his sporting adventures. He could put a very decent dinner on the table, too, at the Hare and Hounds, and Hewitt's frequent invitation to him to join therein and divide a bottle of the best in the cellar soon put the two on the very best of terms. Good terms with Mr. Kentish was Hewitt's great desire, for the information he wanted was of a sort that could never be

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extracted by casual questioning, but must be a matter of open communication by the publican, extracted in what way it might be.

"Look here," said Kentish one day, "I'll put you on to a good thing, my boy—a real good thing. Of course you know all about the Padfield 135 Yards Handicap being run off now?"

"Well, I haven't looked into it much," Hewitt replied. "Ran the first round of heats last Saturday and Monday, didn't they?"

"They did. Well"—Kentish spoke in a stage whisper as he leaned over and rapped the table—"I've got the final winner in this house." He nodded his head, took a puff at his cigar, and added in his ordinary voice: "Don't say nothing."

"No, of course not. Got something on, of course?"

"Rather! What do *you* think? Got any price I liked. Been saving him up for this. Why, he's got twenty-one yards, and he can do even time all the way! Fact! Why, he could win runnin' back'ards. He won his heat on Monday like—like—like that!" The gaffer snapped his fingers, in default of a better illustration, and went on. "He might ha' took it a little easier, I think; it's shortened his price, of course, him jumpin' in by two yards. But you can get decent odds now, if you go about it right. You take my tip—back him for his heat next Saturday, in the second round, and for the final. You'll get a good price for the final, if you pop it down at once. But don't go makin' a song of it, will you, now? I'm givin' you a tip I wouldn't give anybody else."

"Thanks, very much; it's awfully good of you. I'll do what you advise. But isn't there a dark horse anywhere else?"

"Not dark to me, my boy, not dark to me. I know every man runnin' like a book. Old Taylor—him over at the Cop—he's got a very good lad—eighteen yards, and a very good lad indeed; and he's a tryer this time, I know. But, bless you, my lad could give him ten, instead o' taking thrce, and beat him then! When I'm runnin' a real tryer, I'm generally runnin' something very near a winner, you bet; and this time, mind *this* time, I'm runnin' the certainest winner I *ever* run—and I don't often make a mistake. You back him."

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"I shall, if you're as sure as that. But who is he?"

"Oh, Throckett's his name—Sammy Throckett. He's quite a new lad. I've got young Steggles looking after him—sticks to him like wax. Takes his little breathers in my bit o' ground at the back here. I've got a cinder sprint path there, over behind the trees. I don't let him out o' sight much, I can tell you. He's a straight lad, and he knows it'll be worth his while to stick to me; but there's some 'ud poison him, if they thought he'd spoil their books."

Soon afterwards the two strolled towards the tap-room. "I expect Sammy'll be there", the landlord said, "with Steggles. I don't hide him too much—they'd think I'd got something extra on if I did."

In the tap-room sat a lean, wire-drawn-looking youth, with sloping shoulders and a thin face, and by his side was a rather short, thick-set man, who had an odd air, no matter what he did, of proprietorship and surveillance of the lean youth. Several other men sat about, and there was loud laughter, under which the lean youth looked sheepishly angry.

"'Tarn't no good, Sammy, lad," someone was saying, "you a-makin' after Nancy Webb—she'll ha' nowt to do with 'ee."

"Don' like 'em so thread-papery," added another. "No, Sammy, you aren't the lad for she. I see her——"

"What about Nancy Webb?" asked Kentish, pushing open the door. "Sammy's all right, anyway. You keep fit, my lad, an' go on improving, and some day you'll have as good a house as me. Never mind the lasses. Had his glass o' beer, has he?" This to Raggy Steggles, who, answering in the affirmative, viewed his charge as though he were a post, and the beer a recent coat of paint.

"Has two glasses of mild a day," the landlord said to Hewitt. "Never puts on flesh, so he can stand it. Come out now." He nodded to Steggles, who rose and marched Sammy Throckett away for exercise.

On the following afternoon (it was Thursday), as Hewitt and Kentish chatted in the landlord's own snugery, Steggles burst into the room in a great state of agitation and spluttered out: "He—he's bolted; gone away!"

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"What?"

"Sammy—gone! Hooked it! *I* can't find him."

The landlord stared blankly at the trainer, who stood with a sweater dangling from his hand and stared blankly back. "What d'ye mean?" Kentish said, at last. "Don't be a fool! He's in the place somewhere. Find him!"

But this Steggles defied anybody to do. He had looked already. He had left Throckett at the cinder-path behind the trees in his running gear, with the addition of the long overcoat and cap he used in going between the path and the house to guard against chill. "I was goin' to give him a bust or two with the pistol," the trainer explained, "but, when we got over t'other side, 'Raggy,' ses he, 'it's blowin' a bit chilly. I think I'll ha' a sweater. There's one on my box, ain't there?' So in I comes for the sweater, and it weren't on his box, and, when I found it and got back—he weren't there. They'd seen nowt o' him in t' house, and he weren't nowhere."

Hewitt and the landlord, now thoroughly startled, searched everywhere, but to no purpose. "What should he go off the place for?" asked Kentish, in a sweat of apprehension. "'Tain't chilly a bit—it's warm. He didn't want no sweater; never wore one before. It was a piece of kid to be able to clear out. Nice thing, this is. I stand to win two years' takings over him. Here—you'll have to find him."

"Ah, but how?" exclaimed the disconcerted trainer, dancing about distractedly. "I've got all I could scrape on him myself. Where can I look?"

Here was Hewitt's opportunity. He took Kentish aside and whispered. What he said startled the landlord considerably. "Yes, I'll tell you all about that," he said, "if that's all you want. It's no good or harm to me whether I tell or no. But can you find him?"

"That I can't promise, of course. But you know who I am now, and what I'm here for. If you like to give me the information I want, I'll go into the case for you, and, of course, I shan't charge any fee. I may have luck, you know, but I can't promise, of course."

The landlord looked in Hewitt's face for a moment. Then he said: "Done! It's a deal."



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"Very good," Hewitt replied. "Get together the one or two papers you have, and we'll go into my business in the evening. As to Throckett, don't say a word to anybody. I'm afraid it must get out, since they all know about it in the house, but there's no use in making any unnecessary noise. Don't make hedging bets or do anything that will attract notice. Now we'll go over to the back and look at this cinder-path of yours."

Here Steggles, who was still standing near, was struck with an idea. "How about old Taylor, at the Cop, Guv'nor, eh?" he said meaningly. "His lad's good enough to win with Sammy out, and Taylor 'is backing him plenty. Think he knows anything o' this?"

"That's likely," Hewitt observed, before Kentish could reply. "Yes. Look here—suppose Steggles goes and keeps his eye on the Cop for an hour or two, in case there's anything to be heard of? Don't show yourself, of course."

Kentish agreed, and the trainer went. When Hewitt and Kentish arrived at the path behind the trees, Hewitt at once began examining the ground. One or two rather large holes in the cinders were made, as the publican explained, by Throckett, in practising getting off his mark. Behind these were several fresh tracks of spiked shoes. The tracks led up to within a couple of yards of the high fence bounding the ground, and there stopped abruptly and entirely. In the fence, a little to the right of where the tracks stopped, there was a stout door. This Hewitt tried and found ajar.

"That's always kept bolted," Kentish said. "He's gone out that way—he couldn't have gone any other without comin' through the house."

"But he isn't in the habit of making a step three yards long, is he?" Hewitt asked, pointing at the last footmark and then at the door, which was quite that distance away from it. "Besides," he added, opening the door, "there's no footprint here nor outside."

The door opened on a lane, with another fence and a thick plantation of trees at the other side. Kentish looked at the footmarks, then at the door, then down the lane, and finally back towards the house, "That's a lick!" he said.

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"This is a quiet sort of lane," was Hewitt's next remark. "No houses in sight. Where does it lead?"

"That way it goes to the Old Kilns—disused. This way down to a turning off the Padfield and Catton road."

Hewitt returned to the cinder-path again, and once more examined the footmarks. He traced them back over the grass towards the house. "Certainly", he said, "he hasn't gone back to the house. Here is the double line of tracks, side by side, from the house—Steggles' ordinary boots with iron tips, and Throckett's running pumps; thus they came out. Here is Steggles' track in the opposite direction alone, made when he went back for the sweater. Throckett remained; you see various prints in those loose cinders at the end of the path where he moved this way and that, and then two or three paces towards the fence—not directly towards the door, you notice—and there they stop dead, and there are no more, either back or forward. Now, if he had wings, I should be tempted to the opinion that he flew straight away in the air from that spot—unless the earth swallowed him and closed again without leaving a wrinkle on its face."

Kentish stared gloomily at the tracks and said nothing.

"However," Hewitt resumed, "I think I'll take a little walk now and think over it. You go into the house and show yourself at the bar. If anybody wants to know how Throckett is, he's pretty well, thank you. By the by, can I get to the Cop—this place of Taylor's—by this back lane?"

"Yes, down to the end leading to the Catton road, turn to the left and then first on the right. Anyone'll show you the Cop," and Kentish shut the door behind the detective, who straightway walked—towards the Old Kilns.

In little more than an hour he was back. It was now becoming dusk, and the landlord looked out papers from a box near the side window of his snugger, for the sake of the extra light. "I've got these papers together for you," he said, as Hewitt entered. "Any news?"

"Nothing very great. Here's a bit of handwriting I want you to recognize, if you can. Get a light."

Kentish lit a lamp, and Hewitt laid upon the table half a

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dozen small pieces of torn paper, evidently fragments of a letter which had been torn up.

The landlord turned the scraps over, regarding them dubiously. "These aren't much to recognize, anyhow. *I* don't know the writing. Where did you find 'em?"

"They were lying in the lane at the back, a little way down. Plainly they are pieces of a note addressed to someone called Sammy or something very like it. See the first piece, with its 'mmy'? That is clearly from the beginning of the note, because there is no line between it and the smooth, straight edge of the paper above; also, nothing follows on the same line. Someone writes to Throckett—presuming it to be a letter addressed to him, as I do for other reasons—as Sammy. It is a pity that there is no more of the letter to be found than these pieces. I expect the person who tore it up put the rest in his pocket and dropped these by accident."

Kentish, who had been picking up and examining each piece in turn, now dolorously broke out:

"Oh, it's plain he's sold us—bolted and done us; me as took him out o' the gutter, too. Look here—'throw them over'; that's plain enough—can't mean anything else. Means throw *me* over, and my friends—me, after what I've done for him! Then 'right away'—go right away, I s'pose, as he has done. Then"—he was fiddling with the scraps and finally fitted two together—"why, look here, this one with 'lane' on it fits over the one about throwing over, and it says 'poor f' where it's torn; that means 'poor fool', I s'pose—*me*, or 'fat-head', or something like that. That's nice. Why, I'd twist his neck if I could get hold of him; and I will!"

Hewitt smiled. "Perhaps it's not quite so uncomplimentary, after all," he said. "If you can't recognize the writing, never mind. But, if he's gone away to sell you, it isn't much use finding him, is it? He won't win if he doesn't want to."

"Why, he wouldn't dare to rope under my very eyes. I'd—I'd——"

"Well, well; perhaps we'll get him to run, after all, and as well as he can. One thing is certain—he left this place of his own will. Further, I think he is in Padfield now; he went

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towards the town, I believe. And I don't think he means to sell you."

"Well, he shouldn't. I've made it worth his while to stick to me. I've put a fifty on for him out of my own pocket, and told him so; and, if he won, that would bring him a lump more than he'd probably get by going crooked, besides the prize money and anything I might give him over. But it seems to me he's putting me in the cart altogether."

"That we shall see. Meantime, don't mention anything I've told you to any one—not even to Steggles. He can't help us, and he might blurt things out inadvertently. Don't say anything about these pieces of paper, which I shall keep myself. By the by, Steggles is indoors, isn't he? Very well, keep him in. Don't let him be seen hunting about this evening. I'll stay here to-night and we'll proceed with Throckett's business in the morning. And now we'll settle *my* business, please."

In the morning Hewitt took his breakfast in the snugery, carefully listening to any conversation that might take place at the bar. Soon after nine o'clock a fast dog-cart stopped outside, and a red-faced, loud-voiced man swaggered in, greeting Kentish with boisterous cordiality. He had a drink with the landlord, and said: "How's things? Fancy any of 'em for the spring handicap? Got a lad o' your own in, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes," Kentish replied. "Throckett. Only a young un not got to his proper mark yet, I reckon. I think old Taylor's got No. 1 this time."

"Capital lad," the other replied, with a confidential nod. "Shouldn't wonder at all. Want to do anything yourself over it?"

"No, I don't think so. I'm not on at present. Might have a little flutter in the grounds just for fun; nothing else."

There were a few more casual remarks, and then the red-faced man drove away.

"Who was that?" asked Hewitt, who had watched the visitor through the snugery window.

"That's Dandy—bookmaker. Cute chap. He's been told Throckett's missing, I'll bet anything, and come here to pump me. No good, though. As a matter of fact, I've worked Sammy

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Throckett into his books for about half I'm in for altogether—through third parties, of course."

Hewitt reached for his hat. "I'm going out for half an hour now," he said. "If Steggles wants to go out before I come back, don't let him. Let him go and smooth over all those tracks on the cinder-path, very carefully. And, by the by, could you manage to have your son about the place to-day, in case I happen to want a little help out of doors?"

"Certainly; I'll get him to stay in. But what do you want the cinders smoothed for?"

Hewitt smiled, and patted his host's shoulder. "I'll explain all my little tricks when the job's done," he said, and went out.

On the lane from Padfield to Sedby village stood the Plough beerhouse, wherein J. Webb was licensed to sell by retail beer to be consumed on the premises or off, as the thirsty list. Nancy Webb, with a very fine colour, a very curly fringe, and a wide smiling mouth revealing a fine set of teeth, came to the bar at the summons of a stoutish old gentleman in spectacles who walked with a stick.

The stoutish old gentleman had a glass of bitter beer, and then said in the peculiarly quiet voice of a very deaf man: "Can you tell me, if you please, the way into the main Catton road?"

"Down the lane, turn to the right at the cross-roads, then first to the left."

The old gentleman waited with his hand to his ear for some few seconds after she had finished speaking, and then resumed in his whispering voice: "I'm afraid I'm very deaf this morning." He fumbled in his pocket and produced a note-book and pencil. "May I trouble you to write it down? I'm so very deaf at times that I—Thank you."

The girl wrote the direction, and the old gentleman bade her good morning and left. All down the lane he walked slowly with his stick. At the cross-roads he turned, put the stick under his arm, thrust the spectacles into his pocket, and strode away in the ordinary guise of Martin Hewitt. He pulled out his note-book, examined Miss Webb's direction very carefully, and then

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went off another way altogether, towards the Hare and Hounds.

Kentish lounged moodily in his bar. "Well, my boy," said Hewitt, "has Steggles wiped out the tracks?"

"Not yet; I haven't told him. But he's somewhere about; I'll tell him now."

"No, don't. I don't think we'll have that done, after all. I expect he'll want to go out soon—at any rate, some time during the day. Let him go whenever he likes. I'll sit upstairs a bit in the club-room."

"Very well. But how do you know Steggles will be going out?"

"Well, he's pretty restless after his lost *protégé*, isn't he? I don't suppose he'll be able to remain idle long."

"And about Throckett. Do you give him up?"

"Oh, no! Don't you be impatient. I can't say I'm quite confident yet of laying hold of him—the time is so short, you see—but I think I shall at least have news for you by the evening."

Hewitt sat in the club-room until the afternoon, taking his lunch there. At length he saw, through the front window, Raggy Steggles walking down the road. In an instant Hewitt was downstairs and at the door. The road bent eighty yards away, and as soon as Steggles passed the bend the detective hurried after him.

All the way to Padfield town and more than half through it Hewitt dogged the trainer. In the end Steggles stopped at a corner and gave a note to a small boy who was playing near. The boy ran with the note to a bright, well-kept house at the opposite corner. Martin Hewitt was interested to observe the legend, H. DANBY, CONTRACTOR, on a board over a gate in the side wall of the garden behind this house. In five minutes a door in the side gate opened, and the head and shoulders of the red-faced man emerged. Steggles immediately hurried across and disappeared through the gate.

This was both interesting and instructive. Hewitt took up a position in the side street and waited. In ten minutes the trainer reappeared and hurried off the way he had come, along the street Hewitt had considerably left clear for him. Then

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Hewitt strolled towards the smart house and took a good look at it. At one corner of the small piece of forecourt garden, near the railings, a small, baize-covered, glass-fronted notice-board stood on two posts. On its top edge appeared the words H. DANBY. HOUSES TO BE SOLD OR LET. But the only notice pinned to the green baize within was an old and dusty one, inviting tenants for three shops, which were suitable for any business, and which would be fitted to suit tenants. APPLY WITHIN.

Hewitt pushed open the front gate and rang the door-bell. "There are some shops to let, I see," he said, when a maid appeared. "I should like to see them, if you will let me have the key."

"Master's out, sir. You can't see the shops till Monday."

"Dear me, that's unfortunate. I'm afraid I can't wait till Monday. Didn't Mr. Danby leave any instructions, in case anybody should enquire?"

"Yes, sir—as I've told you. He said anybody who called about 'em must come again on Monday."

"Oh, very well, then; I suppose I must try. One of the shops is in High Street, isn't it?"

"No, sir; they're all in the new part—Granville Road."

"Ah, I'm afraid that will scarcely do. But I'll see. Good day."

Martin Hewitt walked away a couple of streets' lengths before he enquired the way to Granville Road. When at last he found that thoroughfare, in a new and muddy suburb, crowded with brickheaps and half-finished streets, he took a slow walk along its entire length. It was a melancholy example of baffled enterprise. A row of a dozen or more shops had been built before any population had arrived to demand goods. Would-be tradesmen had taken many of these shops, and failure and disappointment stared from the windows. Some were half covered by shutters, because the scanty stock scarce sufficed to fill the remaining half. Others were shut almost altogether, the inmates only keeping open the door for their own convenience, and, perhaps, keeping down a shutter for the sake of a little light. Others, again, had not yet fallen so low, but struggled bravely still to maintain a show of business and pros-

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perity, with very little success. Opposite the shops there still remained a dusty, ill-treated hedge and a forlorn-looking field, which an old board offered on building leases. Altogether a most depressing spot.

There was little difficulty in identifying the three shops offered for letting by Mr. H. Danby. They were all together near the middle of the row, and were the only ones that appeared not yet to have been occupied. A dusty To LET bill hung in each window, with written directions to enquire of Mr. H. Danby or at No. 7. Now No. 7 was a melancholy baker's shop, with a stock of three loaves and a plate of stale buns. The disappointed baker assured Hewitt that he usually kept the keys of the shops, but that the landlord, Mr. Danby, had taken them away the day before to see how the ceilings were standing, and had not returned them. "But if you was thinking of taking a shop here," the poor baker added, with some hesitation, "I—I—if you'll excuse my advising you—I shouldn't recommend it. I've had a sickener of it myself."

Hewitt thanked the baker for his advice, wished him better luck in future, and left. To the Hare and Hounds his pace was brisk. "Come," he said, as he met Kentish's enquiring glance, "this has been a very good day, on the whole. I know where our man is now, and I think we can get him, by a little management."

"Where is he?"

"Oh, down in Padfield. As a matter of fact, he's being kept there against his will, we shall find. I see that your friend Mr. Danby is a builder as well as a bookmaker."

"Not a regular builder. He speculates in a street of new houses now and again, that's all. But is he in it?"

"He's as deep in it as anybody, I think. Now, don't fly into a passion. There are a few others in it as well, but you'll do harm if you don't keep quiet."

"But go and get the police; come and fetch him, if you know where they're keeping him. Why——"

"So we will, if we can't do it without them. But it's quite possible we can, and without all the disturbance and, perhaps, delay that calling in the police would involve. Consider, now, in reference to your own arrangements. Wouldn't it pay you



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better to get him back quietly, without a soul knowing—perhaps not even Danby knowing—till the heat is run to-morrow?"

"Well, yes, it would, of course."

"Very good, then, so be it. Remember what I have told you about keeping your mouth shut; say nothing to Steggles or anybody. Is there a cab or brougham your son and I can have for the evening?"

"There's an old hiring landau in the stables you can shut up into a cab, if that'll do."

"Excellent. We'll run down to the town in it as soon as it's ready. But, first, a word about Throckett. What sort of a lad is he? Likely to give them trouble, show fight, and make a disturbance?"

"No, I should say not. He's no plucked un, certainly; all his manhood's in his legs, I believe. You see, he ain't a big sort o' chap at best, and he'd be pretty easy put upon—at least, I guess so."

"Very good, so much the better, for then he won't have been damaged, and they will probably only have one man to guard him. Now the carriage, please."

Young Kentish was a six-foot sergeant of grenadiers home on furlough, and luxuriating in plain clothes. He and Hewitt walked a little way towards the town, allowing the landau to catch them up. They travelled in it to within a hundred yards of the empty shops and then alighted, bidding the driver wait.

"I shall show you three empty shops," Hewitt said, as he and young Kentish walked down Granville Road. "I am pretty sure that Sammy Throckett is in one of them, and I am pretty sure that that is the middle one. Take a look as we go past."

When the shops had been slowly passed, Hewitt resumed: "Now, did you see anything about those shops that told a tale of any sort?"

"No," Sergeant Kentish replied. "I can't say I noticed anything beyond the fact that they were empty—and likely to stay so, I should think."

"We'll stroll back, and look in at the windows, if nobody's watching us," Hewitt said. "You see, it's reasonable to suppose they've put him in the middle one, because that would suit

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their purpose best. The shops at each side of the three are occupied, and, if the prisoner struggled, or shouted, or made an uproar, he might be heard if he were in one of the shops next those inhabited. So that the middle shop is the most likely. Now, see there," he went on, as they stopped before the window of the shop in question, "over at the back there's a staircase not yet partitioned off. It goes down below and up above. On the stairs and on the floor near them there are muddy foot-marks. These must have been made to-day, else they would not be muddy, but dry and dusty, since there hasn't been a shower for a week till to-day. Move on again. Then you noticed that there were no other such marks in the shop. Consequently the man with the muddy feet did not come in by the front door but by the back; otherwise he would have made a trail from the door. So we will go round to the back ourselves."

It was now growing dusk. The small pieces of ground behind the shops were bounded by a low fence, containing a door for each house.

"This door is bolted inside, of course," Hewitt said, "but there is no difficulty in climbing. I think we had better wait in the garden till dark. In the meantime, the jailer, whoever he is, may come out; in which case we shall pounce on him as soon as he opens the door. You have that few yards of cord in your pocket, I think? And my handkerchief, properly rolled, will make a very good gag. Now over."

They climbed the fence and quietly approached the house, placing themselves in the angle of an outhouse out of sight from the windows. There was no sound, and no light appeared. Just above the ground about a foot of window was visible, with a grating over it, apparently lighting a basement. Suddenly Hewitt touched his companion's arm and pointed towards the window. A faint rustling sound was perceptible, and, as nearly as could be discerned in the darkness, some white blind or covering was placed over the glass from the inside. Then came the sound of a striking match, and at the side edge of the window there was a faint streak of light.

"That's the place," Hewitt whispered. "Come, we'll make a push for it. You stand against the wall at one side of the door

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and I'll stand at the other, and we'll have him as he comes out. Quietly, now, and I'll startle them."

He took a stone from among the rubbish littering the garden and flung it crashing through the window. There was a loud exclamation from within, the blind fell, and somebody rushed to the back door and flung it open. Instantly Kentish let fly a heavy right-hander, and the man went over like a skittle. In a moment Hewitt was upon him and the gag in his mouth.

"Hold him," Hewitt whispered hurriedly. "I'll see if there are others."

He peered down through the low window. Within Sammy Throckett, his bare legs dangling from beneath his long overcoat, sat on a packing-box, leaning with his head on his hand and his back towards the window. A guttering candle stood on the mantelpiece, and the newspaper which had been stretched across the window lay in scattered sheets on the floor. No other person besides Sammy was visible.

They led their prisoner indoors. Young Kentish recognized him as a public-house loafer and race-course ruffian well known in the neighbourhood.

"So it's you, is it, Browdie?" he said. "I've caught you one hard clump, and I've half a mind to make it a score more. But you'll get it pretty warm one way or another before this job's forgotten."

Sammy Throckett was overjoyed at his rescue. He had not been ill-treated, he explained, but had been thoroughly cowed by Browdie, who had from time to time threatened him savagely with an iron bar by way of persuading him to quietness and submission. He had been fed, and had taken no worse harm than a slight stiffness from his adventure, due to his light under-attire of jersey and knee-shorts.

Sergeant Kentish tied Browdie's elbows firmly together behind, and carried the line round the ankles, bracing all up tight. Then he ran a knot from one wrist to the other over the back of the neck, and left the prisoner, trussed and helpless, on the heap of straw that had been Sammy's bed.

"You won't be very jolly, I expect," Kentish said, "for some time. You can't shout and you can't walk, and I know you can't untie yourself. You'll get a bit hungry, too, perhaps, but

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that'll give you an appetite. I don't suppose you'll be disturbed till some time to-morrow, unless our friend Danby turns up in the meantime. But you can come along to jail instead, if you prefer it."

They left him where he lay, and took Sammy to the old landau. Sammy walked in slippers, carrying his spiked shoes, hanging by the lace, in his hand.

"Ah," said Hewitt, "I think I know the name of the young lady who gave you those slippers."

Throckett looked ashamed and indignant. "Yes," he said, "they've done me nicely between 'em. But I'll pay her—I'll——"

"Hush, hush!" Hewitt said. "You mustn't talk unkindly of a lady, you know. Get into this carriage, and we'll take you home. We'll see if I can tell you your adventures, without making a mistake. First, you had a note from Miss Webb, telling you that you were mistaken in supposing she had slighted you, and that, as a matter of fact, she had quite done with somebody else—left him—of whom you were jealous. Isn't that so?"

"Well, yes," young Throckett answered, blushing deeply under the carriage-lamp, "but I don't see how you come to know that."

"Then she went on to ask you to get rid of Steggles on Thursday afternoon for a few minutes, and speak to her in the back lane. Now, your running pumps, with their thin soles, almost like paper, no heels and long spikes, hurt your feet horribly if you walk on hard ground, don't they?"

"Ay, that they do—enough to cripple you. I'd never go on much hard ground with 'em."

"They're not like cricket shoes, I see."

"Not a bit. Cricket shoes you can walk anywhere in!"

"Well, she knew this—I think I know who told her—and she promised to bring you a new pair of slippers, and to throw them over the fence for you to come out in."

"I s'pose she's been tellin' you all this?" Throckett said mournfully. "You couldn't ha' seen the letter; I saw her tear it up and put the bits in her pockets. She asked me for it in the lane, in case Steggles saw it."

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"Well, at any rate, you sent Steggles away, and the slippers did come over, and you went into the lane. You walked with her as far as the road at the end, and then you were seized and gagged, and put into a carriage."

"That was Browdie did that," said Throckett, "and another chap I don't know. But—why, this is Padfield High Street!" He looked through the window and regarded the familiar shops with astonishment.

"Of course it is. Where did you think it was?"

"Why, where was that place you found me in?"

"Granville Road, Padfield. I suppose they told you you were in another town?"

"Told me it was Newstead Hatch. They drove for about three or four hours, and kept me down on the floor between the seats so as I couldn't see where we was going."

"Done for two reasons," said Hewitt. "First, to mystify you, and prevent any discovery of the people directing the conspiracy; and second, to be able to put you indoors at night and unobserved. Well, I think I have told you all you know yourself now as far as the carriage."

"But there is the Hare and Hounds just in front. We'll put up here, and I'll get out and see if the coast is clear. I fancy Mr. Kentish would rather you came in unnoticed."

In a few seconds Hewitt was back, and Throckett was conveyed indoors by a side entrance. Hewitt's instructions to the landlord were few, but emphatic. "Don't tell Steggles about it," he said. "Make an excuse to get rid of him, and send him out of the house. Take Throckett into some other bedroom, not his own, and let your son look after him. Then come here, and I'll tell you all about it."

Sammy Throckett was undergoing a heavy grooming with white embrocation at the hands of Sergeant Kentish when the landlord returned to Hewitt. "Does Danby know you've got him?" he asked. "How did you do it?"

"Danby doesn't know yet, and with luck he won't know till he sees Throckett running to-morrow. The man who has sold you is Steggles."

"Steggles?"

"Steggles it is. At the very first, when Steggles rushed in to

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report Sammy Throckett missing, I suspected him. You didn't, I suppose?"

"No. He's always been considered a straight man, and he looked as startled as anybody."

"Yes, I must say he acted it very well. But there was something suspicious in his story. What did he say? Throckett had remarked a chilliness, and asked for a sweater, which Steggles went to fetch. Now, just think. You understand these things. Would any trainer who knew his business (as Steggles does) have gone to bring out a sweater for his man to change for his jersey in the open air, at the very time the man was complaining of chilliness? Of course not. He would have taken his man indoors again and let him change there under shelter. Then supposing Steggles had really been surprised at missing Throckett, wouldn't he have looked about, found the gate open, and *told* you it was open when he first came in? He said nothing of that—we found the gate open for ourselves. So that from the beginning I had a certain opinion of Steggles."

"What you say seems pretty plain now, although it didn't strike me at the time. But, if Steggles was selling us, why couldn't he have drugged the lad? That would have been a deal simpler."

"Because Steggles is a good trainer, and has a certain reputation to keep up. It would have done him no good to have had a runner drugged while under his care; certainly it would have cooked his goose with *you*. It was much the safer thing to connive at kidnapping. That put all the active work into other hands, and left him safe, even if the trick failed. Now, you remember that we traced the prints of Throckett's spiked shoes to within a couple of yards of the fence, and that there they ceased suddenly?"

"Yes. You said it looked as though he had flown up into the air; and so it did."

"But I was sure that it was by that gate that Throckett had left, and by no other. He couldn't have got through the house without being seen, and there was no other way—let alone the evidence of the unbolted gate. Therefore, as the footprints ceased where they did, and were not repeated anywhere in the

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lane, I knew that he had taken his spiked shoes off—probably changing them for something else, because a runner anxious as to his chances would never risk walking on bare feet, with a chance of cutting them. Ordinary, broad, smooth-soled slippers would leave no impression on the coarse cinders bordering the track, and nothing short of spiked shoes would leave a mark on the hard path in the lane behind. The spike-tracks were leading, not directly towards the door, but in the direction of the fence, when they stopped; somebody had handed, or thrown, the slippers over the fence, and he had changed them on the spot. The enemy had calculated upon the spikes leaving a track in the lane that might lead us in our search, and had arranged accordingly.

“So far so good. I could see no footprints near the gate in the lane. You will remember that I sent Steggles off to watch at the Cop before I went out to the back—merely, of course, to get him out of the way. I went out into the lane, leaving you behind, and walked its whole length, first towards the Old Kilns and then back towards the road. I found nothing to help me except these small pieces of paper—which are here in my pocket-book, by the by. Of course this ‘mmy’ might have meant ‘Jimmy’ or ‘Tommy’ as possibly as ‘Sammy’, but they were not to be rejected on that account. Certainly Throckett had been decoyed out of your ground, not taken by force, or there would have been marks of a scuffle in the cinders. And as his request for a sweater was probably an excuse—because it was not at all a cold afternoon—he must have previously designed going out; inference, a letter received; and here were pieces of a letter. Now, in the light of what I have said, look at these pieces. First, there is the ‘mmy’—that I have dealt with. Then see this ‘throw them ov’—clearly a part of ‘throw them over’; exactly what had probably been done with the slippers. Then the ‘poor f’, coming just on the line before, and seen, by joining up with this other piece, might easily be a reference to ‘poor feet’. These coincidences, one on the other, went far to establish the identity of the letter, and to confirm my previous impressions. But then there is something else. Two other pieces evidently mean ‘left him’ and ‘right away’—send Steggles ‘right away’, perhaps; but there is another, containing

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almost all of the words 'hate his', with the word 'hate' underlined. Now, who writes 'hate' with the emphasis of under-scoring—who but a woman? The writing is large and not very regular; it might easily be that of a half-educated woman. Here was something more—Sammy had been enticed away by a woman.

"Now, I remembered that, when we went into the tap-room on Wednesday, some of his companions were chaffing Throckett about a certain Nancy Webb, and the chaff went home, as was plain to see. The woman, then, who could most easily entice Sammy Throckett away was Nancy Webb. I resolved to find who Nancy Webb was and learn more of her.

"Meantime, I took a look at the road at the end of the lane. It was damper than the lane, being lower, and overhung by trees. There were many wheel-tracks, but only one set that turned in the road and went back the way it came, towards the town; and they were narrow wheels—carriage-wheels. Throckett tells me now that they drove him about for a long time before shutting him up; probably the inconvenience of taking him straight to the hiding-place didn't strike them when they first drove off.

"A few enquiries soon set me in the direction of the Plough and Miss Nancy Webb. I had the curiosity to look around the place as I approached, and there, in the garden behind the house, were Steggles and the young lady in earnest confabulation!

"Every conjecture became a certainty. Steggles was the lover of whom Throckett was jealous, and he had employed the girl to bring Sammy out. I watched Steggles home, and gave you a hint to keep him there.

"But the thing that remained was to find Steggles' employer in this business. I was glad to be in when Danby called. He came, of course, to hear if you would blurt out anything, and to learn, if possible, what steps you were taking. He failed. By way of making assurance doubly sure I took a short walk this morning in the character of a deaf gentleman, and got Miss Webb to write me a direction that comprised three of the words on these scraps of paper—'left', 'right', and 'lane'; see, they correspond, the peculiar 'f's', 't's', and all.



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"Now, I felt perfectly sure that Steggles would go for his pay to-day. In the first place, I knew that people mixed up with shady transactions in professional pedestrianism are not apt to trust one another far—they know better. Therefore Steggles wouldn't have had his bribe first. But he would take care to get it before the Saturday heats were run, because once they were over the thing was done, and the principal conspirator might have refused to pay up, and Steggles couldn't have helped himself. Again I hinted he should not go out till I could follow him, and this afternoon, when he went, follow him I did. I saw him go into Danby's house by the side way and come away again. Danby it was, then, who had arranged the business; and nobody was more likely, considering his large pecuniary stake against Throckett's winning this race.

"But now how to find Throckett? I made up my mind he wouldn't be in Danby's own house. That would be a deal too risky, with servants about and so on. I saw Danby was a builder, and had three shops to let—it was on a paper before his house. What more likely prison than an empty house? I knocked at Danby's door and asked for the keys of those shops. I couldn't have them. The servant told me Danby was out (a manifest lie, for I had just seen him), and that nobody could see the shops till Monday. But I got out of her the address of the shops, and that was all I wanted at the time.

"Now, why was nobody to see those shops till Monday? The interval was suspicious—just enough to enable Throckett to be sent away again and cast loose after the Saturday racing, supposing him to be kept in one of the empty buildings. I went off at once and looked at the shops, forming my conclusions as to which would be the most likely for Danby's purpose. Here I had another confirmation of my ideas. A poor, half-bankrupt baker in one of the shops had, by the bills, the custody of a set of keys; but *he*, too, told me I couldn't have them; Danby had taken them away—and on Thursday, the very day—with some trivial excuse, and hadn't brought them back. That was all I wanted or could expect in the way of guidance. The whole thing was plain. The rest you know all about."

"Well, you're certainly as smart as they give you credit for,

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I must say. But suppose Danby had taken down his To LET notice, what would you have done then?"

"We had our course even then. We should have gone to Danby, astounded him by telling him all about his little games, terrorized him with threats of the law, and made him throw up his hand and send Throckett back. But as it is, you see, he doesn't know at this moment—probably won't know till to-morrow afternoon—that the lad is safe and sound here. You will probably use the interval to make him pay for losing the game—by some of the ingenious financial devices you are no doubt familiar with."

"Ay, that I will. He'll give any price against Throckett now, so long as the bet don't come direct from me."

"But about Throckett, now," Hewitt went on. "Won't this confinement be likely to have damaged his speed for a day or two?"

"Ah, perhaps," the landlord replied, "but, bless ye, that won't matter. There's four more in his heat to-morrow. Two I know aren't triers, and the other two I can hold in at a couple of quid apiece any day. The third round and final won't be till to-morrow week, and he'll be as fit as ever by then. It's as safe as ever it was. How much are you going to have on? I'll lump it on for you safe enough. This is a chance not to be missed; it's picking money up."

"Thank you; I don't think I'll have anything to do with it. This professional pedestrian business doesn't seem a pretty one at all. I don't call myself a moralist, but, if you'll excuse my saying so, the thing is scarcely the game I care to pick up money at in any way."

"Oh, very well! if you think so, I won't persuade ye, though I don't think so much of your smartness as I did, after that. Still, we won't quarrel; you've done me a mighty good turn, that I must say, and I only feel I aren't level without doing something to pay the debt. Come, now, you've got your trade as I've got mine. Let me have the bill, and I'll pay it like a lord, and feel a deal more pleased than if you made a favour of it—not that I'm above a favour, of course. But I'd prefer paying, and that's a fact."

"My dear sir, you have paid," Hewitt said, with a smile.

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"You paid in advance. It was a bargain, wasn't it, that I should do your business if you would help me in mine? Very well; a bargain's a bargain, and we've both performed our parts. And you mustn't be offended at what I said just now."

"That I won't! But as to that Raggy Steggles, once those heats are over to-morrow, I'll—well . . ."

It was on the following Sunday week that Martin Hewitt, in his rooms in London, turned over his paper and read, under the head PADFIELD ANNUAL 135 YARDS HANDICAP, this announcement: "FINAL HEAT: THROCKETT, FIRST; WILLIS, SECOND; TREWBY, THIRD; OWEN, 0; HOWELL, 0. A RUNAWAY WIN BY NEARLY THREE YARDS."

# THE DOUBLE PROBLEM

BY

F. A. M. WEBSTER

*from Old Ebbie, Detective Up to Date*

OLD EBBIE HURDLES A PROBLEM ABOUT FIELD SPORTS

*This is an interesting story, for its detective is that little-known (except among connoisseurs) but salty character, Old Ebbie; it is also the only detective short story within our ken which involves a mystery of field sports.*

In recording the criminal investigations of my friend Ebenezer Entwistle, the old Pimlico chemist of gentle birth, who, unable to fulfil his early desire of becoming a doctor, had adopted this humbler branch of the science of Æsculapius, I find so much that is terrible and horrific that it is at times a relief to turn to some lighter phase of his researches.

"We are about to move among important people, my dear Hicks," was the remark with which one evening he greeted my arrival at the little shop which stands at the corner of Tolnody Street.

"Indeed," I answered; "if this is another investigation you will have seriously to consider the question of engaging an assistant, since criminology and not chemistry seems now to occupy the major portion of your time."

As I made this remark, I noticed that he held in his hand a copy of *The Sportsman*, a paper it was his habit sometimes to peruse.

"I learn from this newspaper," he said, holding it up, "that a young man who hurls a sixteen-pound hammer a matter of between one hundred and seventy and one hundred and eighty feet is regarded by the sporting public of this country as something of a genius?"

"Yes, indeed," I answered, "especially when a Freshman, in his first year of open competition, breaks the British record

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and bids fair to eclipse the World's Champion, whose performance has stood unchallenged since 1913; for I assume that your remark relates to the Oxonian, J. C. McLaglan, who is attaining fame so rapidly in the world of sport. He seems, also, to have courted a quite unnecessary degree of notoriety by growing a beard. The papers have been full of his pictures."

"I gather, further," said Old Ebbie, following his original train of thought, "that the taste of the British public is gradually changing. Football furnishes an absorbing interest for two-thirds of the year; cricket, which has fallen into disfavour with the uneducated and unintelligent, has small claims to general attention during the summer months, so that the more exciting, but no less scientifically practised, sport of athletics proper bids fair to provide the popular spectacle from April to September."

"Yes," I answered, "but it is not a matter of satisfaction to the best class of amateur athlete."

"Indeed, and why is that?" asked Ebbie.

"Because the growing popularity of the pastime has attracted the attention of the bookmakers. For example, there is almost as much betting this year upon the result of the Inter-University Sports at Queen's Club as on the Boat Race."

"Ha!" ejaculated Old Ebbie, and not another word did he speak for upwards of half an hour.

"Well," he said at last, "I have here a letter from the dean of St. Luke's College, Oxford. There has been some trouble about a cheque which he asks me to investigate privately. It appears that some person, posing as an undergraduate and wearing the St. Luke's College colours, purchased certain goods from a local tradesman, for which he paid with a cheque; this, upon presentation at the London bank upon which it was drawn, was returned, marked *No account*; neither the name of the drawer nor his handwriting in any way resemble those of any undergraduate of the college in question. Not unnaturally the dean would prefer to have the problem solved privately, and, in the meantime, he has reimbursed the tradesman out of his own pocket."

"And has the origin of the cheque form been ascertained?" I queried.

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"Yes," answered Old Ebbie, "it was torn, with its counter-foil, from Lord Rockpool's private cheque book."

"Hum," I said, "I know young Rockpool slightly, having served on the staff of his father, the Earl of Hartland, for a short time."

I met Ebbie at Paddington pretty early next morning, and together we journeyed down to Oxford, where the courteous old dean entertained us to lunch at his college, refusing to say one word concerning the case until we had eaten.

After lunch he took us to his study and placed the returned cheque, signed *James Vivian*, in Old Ebbie's hands. There was absolutely nothing which he, personally, could tell us about the affair, but I could see that my friend was keenly interested from the manner in which he scrutinized the pink, engraved slip of paper.

"The hand is disguised, and will tell us nothing more than that the cheque was drawn by a well-educated man who used a fountain pen," he said. "The name of *James Vivian* has been assumed by someone who, having written the first letter, hesitated a moment before choosing the nom de plume he would employ. He is either an American or one who has lived in the United States long enough to have become accustomed to American business methods."

"Dear me," exclaimed the dean, "how do you deduce these circumstances?"

"It is simple enough," answered Old Ebbie with a slight smile. "You will observe that the writing is fine and well formed; the broadening of the letters shows that they have been written slowly, which would hardly be the case with an educated man, unless he was giving to those letters an unfamiliar or seldom employed shape. If you will look at the writing you will notice a certain hardness of outline and also a degree of blackness, which proves that no blotting-paper has been employed; now a shop-keeper almost invariably offers a customer who writes a cheque the use of a sheet of blotting-paper, unless, as in this case, the writing dries at once, as is the way with some fountain-pen ink. There is a slight, but none the less significant, thickening at the termination of the final up-stroke of the initial *J*, where the man

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paused an instant before inscribing the next letter. On the whole, I should say that he was used to writing the *J*, but not the *a* which follows it. Finally, you will observe that in dating the cheque he has placed the number representing the month first, the number representing the day of the month second, and the number representing the year last, as is the American custom."

"It all sounds very simple as you explain it," said the dean, "but I must confess that I had overlooked all those little details that you make to appear so painfully simple and obvious."

"Ah," said Old Ebbie, "d'you remember what Stevenson said? 'There is nothing more disenchanting to man than to be shown the springs and mechanism of any art.'"

"Surely this is a very slight affair with which you occupy your valuable time, my dear Ebbie," I remarked as, having said good-bye to the dean, we strolled down the High to the small jeweller's shop at which the cheque had been given in payment for goods to the extent of some fifty pounds.

"There is nothing macabre about it, certainly," he answered, "but there are some unusual circumstances that raise this case above the category of commonplace crimes. We shall see."

"Well," said Ebbie to the jeweller, whose shop was small and dark, "the dean of St. Luke's has sent us to see you about this bad cheque."

"Yes, sir, I shall be pleased to answer your questions," said the man.

"Have you a list of the things purchased?"

"There was only one purchase, sir; a ring comprising a single large diamond held in a woman's hand."

"But surely that was an extraordinary piece of jewellery for an undergraduate to acquire?"

"So I thought, but the gentleman seemed much taken with it, and quite turned up his nose at a stone of the first water in a simple setting, which I offered, and even recommended, in preference to the other. But he said it was for his own use and he preferred it."

"Hum! Had you ever seen this customer before?"

"No."

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"Would you know him again?"

"I'm afraid not; I was just closing the shop and most of the lights were out; moreover, he wore a heavy ulster with the collar turned up and had a scarf of St. Luke's colours wrapped right up round his chin."

"Did you notice anything peculiar about him?"

"Nothing, except his arms, sir, which were abnormally long."

"Come," said Ebbie, "that is at least something to go upon. Had he any accent?"

"Not an accent, sir; but, now that you mention it, I remember that he seemed to choose his words with some care. But a great many young gentlemen do that nowadays in their first term."

"By the way," said Ebbie, as we were leaving the shop, "he wrote the cheque with a fountain pen, didn't he?"

"Why, yes, sir," replied the man in some surprise.

"It is always something to have one's deductions confirmed as one goes along," said Ebbie, when we found ourselves once more upon the pavement. "It would appear that despite a certain degree of education our man is not quite a gentleman."

"Because he chooses his words carefully?" I asked.

"No, but because he buys a ring better suited to the hand of a professional boxer than that of an Oxford undergraduate."

From the terse manner in which the answer was given I gathered that my companion did not wish to converse, and so I remained silent as we walked to "Green Lawns", a large house standing in its own grounds, at which we had been informed that Lord Rockpool was staying. It was a low, prepossessing building, well sheltered by trees, the front facing the road and the back looking across a stretch of smooth lawn, which ran almost up to the wall, towards St. Cuthbert's College, from which, also, it was screened by a row of trees.

The rooms occupied by Lord Rockpool were immediately over the dining-room and drawing-room; these opened straight on to the lawn by way of french windows, set in three-sided bays, that projected from the main structure, the windows being protected by shutters at night. We ascertained, later, that these shutters were always closed at tea-time, that



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is to say, before it was quite dark, during the winter months. These twin bays were covered with lead, their flat roofs being some ten and a half feet above the ground.

The man-servant who answered the door informed us that his lordship was at present attending a committee meeting of the Oxford University Athletic Club, of which he was at that time president, but that he would most certainly be in at six o'clock.

Leaving our names and a message that we had been asked to call upon Lord Rockpool by the dean of St. Luke's, we made our way to the Rardolph Hotel, whither our baggage had preceded us, and where we now ordered tea.

At six o'clock precisely we presented ourselves again at "Green Lawns". The door was answered by the same man-servant, who now informed us that his lordship was in and would see us. I noticed at the moment that the man was perturbed, if not actually agitated.

I was behind my companion as we entered Rockpool's room, and was amused to observe the slight start of surprise caused by the somewhat bizarre appearance of the old chemist. Ebbie was clad, as usual, in square-tailed morning coat, with large flap pockets, rabbit-skin waistcoat, Gladstone collar, and crossover bird's-eye cravat. A moment later Rockpool caught sight of me, and came quickly forward.

"How d'you do, Captain Hicks?" he said. "We have not met since you stayed at Hartland more than a year ago."

"The last time I saw you was at Queen's last March, when you won the Mile," I answered, "but upon that occasion I had no opportunity of speaking to you."

To my intense surprise a shadow crossed his face upon my mentioning his victory against Cambridge. And then I noticed that the window was wide open; another surprising circumstance, for the evening was cold, even for early March.

Before anything further could be said, Lord Rockpool turned to Old Ebbie.

"And you", he said, holding out his hand, "are the famous Mr. Ebenezer Entwistle, whose brain is said to be one of the most acute at present employed in criminal research. Well,

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sir, I am delighted to make you welcome, for you come at a most opportune moment."

"You, my lord, are interested then in this affair of the false cheque which has been uttered?" asked Old Ebbie in his quiet, cultured voice, which seemed always to place him at once upon a friendly footing with those with whom he was brought into contact, no matter what their station in life might be.

"But very indifferently, I fear," answered Rockpool. "The affair is trivial, after all: the tradesman has been paid and the dean can afford the money, so it seems the only loser is the poor devil who allowed himself to be tempted to the commission of such a petty and pitiful felony."

"But how do you suppose the person in question was afforded the opportunity of extracting a cheque from your book?" asked Ebbie.

"Nothing could be easier," answered Rockpool. "I have several banking accounts, and usually carry a cheque book in the pocket of whatever coat I happen to be wearing. Why, it was only the other day that the ground man at the Iffley Road track returned to me a cheque book which he had found in the breast-pocket of an old blazer I had given him to throw away, and which had been hanging on a peg in the dressing-room for months."

"And was it from that particular book that the cheque form was purloined?"

"No, but from another, with which I am afraid that I was equally negligent. I shall be more careful in future, since this unsavoury episode has aroused my sense of responsibility and I now realize that my carelessness has in some measure led another man into crime. So strongly have I felt this, indeed, that I asked the dean to allow me to reimburse the silversmith the 'pair of ponies' of which he was defrauded, but Dr. Seaton would not hear of it, a circumstance which has annoyed me greatly."

"I see," said Ebbie. "But have you no idea as to the approximate date upon which this cheque form was abstracted?"

"Not the least in the world, for I had not used the book myself for more than three months; so you see that it is no use for us to discuss that matter any further; and, meantime, I

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have a much more extraordinary problem to offer you, if you would care to undertake the investigation?"

"I must first hear the nature of the case before I can say whether I will undertake it or not," my friend answered guardedly.

"Very well," said Rockpool, "I will relate the circumstances; but whether you undertake the case or not, what I am about to say must, of course, be treated in the strictest confidence. I ask for this assurance, since the matter affects the University as a whole. If I alone were concerned, I should be perfectly content to rely upon your discretion."

"You may do so in any case, my lord," said Old Ebbie, with equal formality.

For some moments Rockpool sat at the table considering the situation before committing it to speech.

"I wonder", he said at length, "if either of you is sufficiently interested in sport generally to have observed that the exaggeration of professionalism is gradually killing the public interest in Association football, which, for many years, has been a sort of fetish with the masses. The professionals, by eliminating the charge, have deprived the game of a feature of robustness which was, at one time, closely allied to the art of tackling, which still keeps the Rugby game healthy. Furthermore, the finicking exactness of the professional player has robbed the game of its goal-getting possibilities, and, therefore, the public are looking around for some other form of sport upon which to fasten their affections. Athletics, a branch of sport that has hitherto been almost entirely free from professionalism and the betting evil, has, in consequence, come in for a quite unpleasant boom."

"So I have already gathered," interrupted Old Ebbie.

"Not unnaturally," continued Rockpool, "both here and at Cambridge we have been pestered to death by newspaper people and Press photographers, since the daily papers are concentrating upon the approaching Oxford and Cambridge Sports in a most unprecedented manner."

"In fact," I interposed, "the Sports this year are creating just as much public interest as the Boat Race?"

"Yes," answered Rockpool, "and I am afraid that people

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are betting equally freely upon both events. And then, of course, that infernal fellow McLaglan growing a beard gave the Press photographers an excellent opportunity of exploiting us."

"But surely it is unusual for a Fresher thus to go against the wishes of his associates?" I said.

"An ordinary Fresher, yes," replied Rockpool, "but McLaglan has come up late. He must be nearly thirty years of age. I should think he has been abroad a good deal. He is very independent."

"I see," I answered.

"We had a meeting with the O.U.A.C. committee a week ago," he continued, "when it was agreed that we should do all in our power to support the Amateur Athletic Association in its endeavour to combat the betting evil, for which reason it was decided that, contrary to previous custom, we should not this year publish the selected teams until the eve of the contest. You must quite understand", he added impressively, "that we do not object to publicity or to providing clean sport for the genuine sport-loving public, but we do resent being exploited for the benefit of those people who follow sport purely and simply for what they can get out of it."

"Yes, the point is quite clear," answered Ebbie.

"This afternoon", continued Rockpool, "the committee of the O.U.A.C. met to award Blues; a point of contention arose, and it was some considerable time before we finally selected the team which will meet Cambridge at Queen's, at the end of the month. Even so, those who are to have their Blues will not be told yet, but everyone who has been training has been requested to continue work at Iffley Road."

"And what was the particular point of contention?" asked Ebbie.

"As to whether McLaglan should be given his Blue," answered Rockpool.

"What!" I exclaimed. "Exclude the British record holder from the team—impossible! Besides, my dear fellow, it seems to me that Oxford and Cambridge are so evenly matched this year that McLaglan's hammer-throwing is the one thing which may prevent the Sports from resulting in an inconclusive tie."

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"That was what the majority of the committee thought," said Rockpool dryly, "but McLaglan has not the right outlook in relation to sport. This is not snobbishness," he added, "for a board-school boy would be equally as welcome in the team as an Etonian, if he was a sportsman, which McLaglan is not. He is boastful and a bad loser, and has already done a number of things well calculated to bring University athletics into bad repute."

"Such as growing a beard?" queried Old Ebbie, with a sly smile.

"Yes, that amongst other things."

"Such as?"

"A suspicion of shadiness in money matters."

"But what made him grow a beard?" I interposed.

"Heaven alone knows," replied Rockpool. "But we are getting away from the main issue. I returned here from the committee meeting a few minutes after you had called, and immediately sent Smithers, my man, out to get an evening paper. I placed the list of Blues who will compete against Cambridge upon my desk, and then it suddenly occurred to me that some of those infernal newspaper fellows would be along at any moment, pestering me for information. I ran downstairs to give the parlour-maid instructions to tell them, should they call, that I had nothing to communicate. I found the girl laying my landlady's dinner table.

"As I was giving my instructions in the dining-room, which is immediately beneath this study, I heard a slight thud overhead, and asked the girl what it could be.

"I'm sure I don't know, sir," she answered, 'for there is no one else in the house, except you and me and cook, who is down in the basement.'

"I ran upstairs immediately and found the window wide open. The list of Blues had vanished from my desk.

"You will observe that this room is approached by a long passage, from which the bath-room and lavatory open; there was no one in either of those rooms, and no one could have got downstairs; for the parlour-maid, seeing my excitement, had followed me to the foot of the staircase. A moment later Smithers returned, and together we searched every inch of

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the house, while Helen remained on guard at the foot of the stairs.

"One moment," interrupted Ebbie. "Did your man know that you had the list?"

"No!"

"Did you look out of the window?"

"Yes, but there was no sign of anyone upon the lead flat of the dining-room window below, nor could I see any means by which anyone could have mounted to my window from beneath."

"And were the blinds drawn in the dining-room when you were speaking to the parlour-maid?"

"Yes, the blinds were down and the shutters closed and fastened."

"Good! And what did you do next?"

"I decided to await your arrival, since the matter was far more in your province than in mine."

"Good again," said Ebbie. "If you have a strong electric torch we will examine first the lead flat and then the garden."

"I can give you something better than a torch, for I have one of those petrol-gas storm lanterns; it gives a tremendous light."

While the lamp was being fetched, Old Ebbie examined the room minutely, but apparently without result. This inspection finished, he slipped off his boots and stepped out on to the lead flat in his stocking feet.

"There are numerous indentations in the lead," he remarked, after a momentary inspection, "but it is impossible to say whether they are new."

He got down on to his knees and peered over the edge of the flat roof, holding the lantern out before him.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "The lead guttering has been completely crushed right in the centre of the bay, and yet the break is a single one and not very wide, so that it can hardly have been made by a ladder. Still it is too broad for the imprint of a rope. Well, well! Let us go below and see if the ground has any secrets to reveal."

Outside the dining-room window we found a single deep impression in the ground, circular and about nine inches in

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circumference; from the imprint upon the frosty grass it appeared as if a stout rope had been dragged back perpendicularly some fifteen feet from the hole. Closer inspection of the circular impression in the turf revealed three slightly deeper holes, breaking the circumference triangularly. A mat was fetched, and Old Ebbie lay down to make more minute examination by the aid of a magnifying-glass and the concentrated beam of a powerful electric torch. Presently he passed the torch to me and took out his knife. From the triangular area enclosed by the three slightly deeper holes he delicately extracted a very thin layer of hard earth, in which were embedded infinitesimally small white flecks; in two places the edge of this dry crust was broken as if it had been pierced.

"I do not think there is anything else to be learned here," said Old Ebbie, standing up and putting the thin layer of earth carefully away in his pocket case. "Have you ever been in the fen country, my lord? No? Ah, well, it is an interesting district. I was brought up there."

Rockpool, Smithers and I regarded Entwistle with frank amazement. To us it appeared that he was drivelling.

"By the way," he added, as if to change the conversation, "could you tell me when Mr. McLaglan began to grow a beard?"

"Yes," said Rockpool, "it was some weeks before Christmas. I remember, because he came to ask me about the Rhodes scholars coming over from the United States, and I told him he had at least nothing to fear from the American hammer-throwers, who would be up this term."

"Is he a heavy man?"

"Oh, yes; he has need of weight, you know, as a hammer-thrower."

"Thank you," said Ebbie, "and now have you such a thing as a tape? I want to measure the height of that lead flat from the ground."

Smithers having procured a tape, the measurement was made and the height found to be exactly ten feet six inches.

"Hum!" said Ebbie. "Now how the deuce d'you think that anyone got up there so quickly without the aid of a ladder?"

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"I'm sure I don't know," answered Rockpool. "But I'm quite certain it was one of those damned journalists, and that the composition of the team will appear in one of the papers to-morrow morning."

"Ah, well, we shall see," said Ebbie, and with that we walked back to the Randolph Hotel, where we stayed the night.

Rockpool was wrong apparently in his surmise, since none of the daily papers published a list of Blues next morning.

At breakfast, Ebbie was quite cheerful.

"You were sports officer to your battalion at one time, weren't you?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered.

"Very well then," he said, "let us walk out to Iffley Road to-day. I understand that the Blues and the problematical Blues will be training; you shall explain to me some of the mysteries of athletics, about which, I must confess, I know but little. I want, moreover, to see this wonderful hammer-thrower. I have been thinking a lot about his performances and have worked out a few most interesting mathematical calculations; the strength and skill which enable him to throw a sixteen-pound ball nearly one hundred and eighty feet must be simply phenomenal, as you will see for yourself if you work out in foot-pounds the resistance of the whirling hammer-head to the body while the thrower is turning. It would be interesting to know his weight and measurements."

"As it happens, I can tell you his weight and height," I answered. "He stands just six feet and weighs two hundred and thirty-five pounds; his reach, I believe, is abnormal."

"Well, I should much like to see him," said Ebbie.

This wish, however, was not to be gratified. Rockpool was just leaving the track after a training spin, when we arrived at Iffley Road; as we stood chatting, I asked him if McLaglan had been down that morning.

"No," he replied, "he is most particular about his training, and will only throw at that time each day that most nearly corresponds with the hour at which he will have to compete at Queen's; thus he ensures being at his best at the same hour each day."



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"By the way," asked Ebbie, "at what school was McLaglan educated?"

"I do not know," Rockpool replied. "He always appears in the programme as 'Privately and St. Luke's College'."

That afternoon we returned to Iffley Road, but the hammer-thrower did not put in an appearance. Ebbie was disappointed, but still I could see that he was enchanted with the evolutions of the hurdlers and high jumpers. Also we stood for a long time watching the pole-vaulters at work, and it was with difficulty that I was able to make the old chemist believe that more than one foreigner had beaten thirteen feet in this event.

"Really, that seems quite incredible, but what height can these men accomplish?" he said, as we stood beside the sawdust-filled pit into which the vaulters were landing over the high bar after flinging back their spiked poles.

I turned to an undergraduate standing by to get the information.

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "Washburn Thorne, the Rhodes fellow from Cuthbert's, will do something better than twelve feet, I believe, but we've no one else who can reach ten feet; but neither have the Cantabs, for that matter."

Over tea Old Ebbie remained silent, except for such muttered soliloquies as I had learned to regard as an infallible sign that he was rapidly arriving at his final conclusions, although, for the life of me, I was unable to see how he could have fixed upon one single circumstance in this present case.

The dottle fell from his third pipe, as he knocked it against the mantelpiece before rising with assured determination.

"Let us go to see Lord Rockpool," he said, "there is someone to whom I wish him to present me."

Rockpool, as mystified as myself, took us round to St. Cuthbert's, where we found that Washburn Thorne had sported his oak, but since Old Ebbie had said that the matter was urgent, the O.U.A.C. president did not hesitate to hammer upon the door. It was opened presently by a typical American of the best type; a youth whose high cheekbones, aquiline features and sensitive hands attested his nationality. He stood about five feet eight inches, and must, I should say, have

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weighed all of a hundred and fifty pounds, for his arms and shoulders bulked big through his clothes.

"Sorry to bother you, Thorne," said Rockpool, "but this gentleman, Mr. Ebenezer Entwistle, wants to see you on a matter which is most urgent."

"Sure! Won't you come right in?" answered the young American, in pleasant, well-assured tones. I must admit that I took to him at once.

"Well, what can I do for you, Mr. Entwistle?" he asked, when we were all seated.

Old Ebbie looked around the room until his eyes rested upon a couple of bamboo, tape-bound vaulting poles in one corner.

"I believe that you have reduced pole-vaulting to a fine art, Mr. Thorne," said Ebbie.

"Why yes, sir. I figure to get over the bar with the least margin of waste each time."

"And you can fall from considerable heights without sustaining the least injury?"

At this question the American fidgeted a little and a strange look came into his eyes.

"Yes," he said, more curtly, "if you land anyhow you tire yourself out long before the competition is over."

"And you use a pole with three spikes set triangularly at the point?"

"See here!" exclaimed Thorne, springing up. "I don't mind answering your questions; but what is there back of all this?"

"Nothing; except that Lord Rockpool would be interested to know why you entered his rooms last evening and extracted the list of those athletes who will represent your University against Cambridge at the end of the month."

"Eh?" interrupted Rockpool. "How the deuce could Thorne have entered my rooms?"

"The thud you heard overhead, my lord, when you were in the dining-room, was caused by Mr. Thorne alighting on the lead flat which he reached by means of his vaulting pole. I saw the place where it touched the soft lead guttering; we all saw the small circular indentation in the turf pierced triangularly, and I, being a fen-man, knew that it was made by

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the point of a spiked vaulting-pole. The imprint was left on the grass where it fell, and you and Hicks mistook it for the mark made by a rope. The thin layer of dried earth fell from between the spikes when the pole was planted, but I'll admit the white flecks puzzled me until I saw the sawdust in the pit at Iffley Road to-day."

"But why do you fasten this affair on to Thorne with such certitude?" asked Rockpool.

"Because the height of the lead flat from the ground is ten feet six inches, and Mr. Thorne is the only man at either Oxford or Cambridge who can beat ten feet at present."

Washburn Thorne was about to speak, but Old Ebbie held up his hand.

"Lord Rockpool", he said, "was anxious to ascribe the business to some too enterprising journalist; I, personally, suspected that the betting fraternity had bribed someone to obtain early and accurate information for them, but since I have seen Mr. Thorne the matters admit of a different interpretation, and I think McLaglan, too, may play a part, conscious or otherwise, in this affair.

"You, my lord, have told us that the controversy was somewhat hot as to whether he should be given his Blue, and I have wondered if he knew of this and had been anxious to satisfy himself, hence my question concerning his weight. The fact that he weighs nearly two hundred and forty pounds put him out of court as a pole-vaulter, but I still have a feeling that Mr. Thorne knows something about McLaglan and wanted to see the list of Blues on that account.

"It struck me as odd that McLaglan, a man of thirty, should be so foolish as to antagonize his associates by growing a beard, but you will remember that you, my lord, told us he was not quite a gentleman and had been much abroad, and that he did not begin to grow his objectionable beard until he knew the names of the Rhodes scholars expected from America. In other words, I wondered if anyone coming over had knowledge of his previous career which would be detrimental, and if for that reason he was growing a beard.

"Mixed up with all this is a fantastic second, or perhaps I should say first, problem—that of the false cheque.

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"The man who wrote that cheque was an American, or had lived in America, as witness the method of dating it; the silversmith says his customer had abnormally long arms, by which, in common with other hammer-throwers, McLaglan is distinguished; the shopkeeper tells me, moreover, that his customer chose his words carefully, as, I told myself, one might do who wished to conceal his American accent. You must remember, too, that McLaglan has been educated privately, and that nothing is known as to his antecedents. Finally, Lord Rockpool has told us that some suspicion attaches to the man of being not quite straight in money matters. I have no proof of his guilt in the matter of the cheque.

"And now, Mr. Thorne, what have you to say to all this?"

Washburn Thorne, who had been regarding Old Ebbie with ever-growing amazement, laughed nervously.

"I admit entering Lord Rockpool's rooms in the manner you have mentioned," he said, "but not from any evil motive. I was at Cornell before I came to Oxford, and I went with the U.S.A. Olympic team to the last celebration of the Olympic Games. There was a hammer-thrower aboard the U.S.A. ship who made himself pretty obnoxious, and who, after the Games, turned professional and then disappeared. This was the so-called J. C. McLaglan, and once I spotted him I was determined he should not bring discredit upon Oxford University by representing us against Cambridge; but all the time I did not like to speak in case he should be trying to get a good education for honest ends; but I knew I'd have to tell Rockpool if the committee had given him his Blue. I only meant to look at the list, but I heard Rockpool running upstairs, and so I grabbed the paper, slipped through the window and jumped down from the lead flat. I played 'possum in the bushes awhile, and then slipped over the wall back to College."

"Ah!" said Old Ebbie. "Then McLaglan's beard didn't deceive you?"

"It did absolutely."

"Then how did you recognize him?"

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"In the strangest possible way," answered Thorne, smiling. "On board the boat chartered for the U.S.A. Olympic team the hammer-thrower in question used to recite a poem he himself had written all about a man called James Vivian, and here in Oxford I heard McLaglan recite the same puerile verses, and spotted him at once."

"Well, now, that is even more extraordinary than you realize," exclaimed Old Ebbie with a dry chuckle, "for we have solved the double problem. The false cheque given to the silversmith was signed *James Vivian*; McLaglan has borrowed the name of his invented hero."

"I think we had better go and call on McLaglan," interposed Lord Rockpool. "As a professional he is, of course, altogether outside the pale, but I wonder what has been his object in this masquerade?"

"I fancy he was brought over by a bunch of bookmakers who wanted to make sure of an Oxford victory," said Washburn Thorne, "but I'm afraid you won't find him. I warned him last night that he must not dare to represent the Varsity at Queen's Club or I would show him up, and I believe he quitted Oxford early this morning."

In this assumption the Rhodes scholar was correct, nor did the pseudo-amateur hammer-thrower again put in an appearance at that ancient seat of learning.

# TROJAN HORSE

BY

ELLERY QUEEN

*from The New Adventures of Ellery Queen*

ELLERY QUEEN SOLVES A ROSE BOWL FOOTBALL MYSTERY

*Again necessity becomes the mother of inclusion. Our own Trojan Horse is the single detective short story we know of which poses and solves a crime of American football. . . . Damon Runyon has written some hilarious football short stories, but—alas—they are not detective stories. Football has been the thematic background of at least one mystery novel, however—Cortland Fitzsimmons' Seventy Thousand Witnesses. In fact, Mr. Fitzsimmons has written two other sports mystery novels: Death on the Diamond, which concerns baseball, and Crimson Ice, which concerns hockey.*

"Whom", demanded Miss Paula Paris across the groaning board, "do you like, Mr. Queen?"

Mr. Queen instantly mumbled: "You," out of a mouthful of Vermont turkey, chestnut stuffing, and cranberry sauce.

"I didn't mean that, silly," said Miss Paris, nevertheless pleased. "However, now that you've brought the subject up—will you say such pretty things when we're married?"

Mr. Ellery Queen paled and, choking, set down his weapons. When he had first encountered the lovely Miss Paris, Hollywood's reigning goddess of gossip, Miss Paris had been suffering from homophobia, or morbid fear of man; she had been so terrified of crowds that she had not for years set foot outside her virginal white frame house in the Hollywood hills. Mr. Queen, stirred by a nameless emotion, determined to cure the lady of her psychological affliction. The therapy, he conceived, must be both shocking and compensatory; and so he made love to her.

And lo! although Miss Paris recovered, to his horror Mr. Queen found that the cure may sometimes present a worse

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problem than the affliction. For the patient promptly fell in love with her healer; and the healer did not himself escape certain excruciating emotional consequences.

His precious liberty faced with this alluring menace, Mr. Queen now choked over the luscious Christmas dinner which Miss Paris had cunningly cooked with her own slim hands and served *en tête-à-tête* in her cosy maple and chintz dining-room.

"Oh, relax," pouted Miss Paris. "I was joking. What makes you think I'd marry a creature who studies cut-throats and chases thieves for the enjoyment of it?"

"Horrible fate for a woman," Mr. Queen hastened to agree. "Besides, I'm not good enough for you."

"Darned tootin' you're not! But you haven't answered my question. Do you think Carolina will lick USC next Sunday?"

"Oh, the Rose Bowl game," said Mr. Queen, discovering his appetite miraculously. "More turkey, please! . . . Well, if Ostermoor lives up to his reputation, the Spartans should breeze in."

"Really?" murmured Miss Paris. "Aren't you forgetting that Roddy Crockett is the whole Trojan backfield?"

"Southern California Trojans, Carolina Spartans," said Mr. Queen thoughtfully, munching. "Spartans versus Trojans . . . Sort of modern gridiron Siege of Troy."

"Ellery Queen, that's plagiarism or—or something! You read it in my column."

"Is there a Helen for the lads to battle over?" grinned Mr. Queen.

"You're *so* romantic, Queenikins. The only female involved is a very pretty, rich, and sensible co-ed named Joan Wing, and she *isn't* the kidnapped love of any of the Spartans."

"Curses," said Mr. Queen, reaching for the brandied plum pudding. "For a moment I thought I had something."

"But there's a Priam of a sort, because Roddy Crockett is engaged to Joan Wing, and Joanie's father, Pop Wing, is just about the noblest Trojan of them all."

"Maybe you know what you're talking about, beautiful," said Mr. Queen, "but *I* don't."

"You're positively the worst-informed man in California! Pop Wing is USC's most enthusiastic alumnus, isn't he?"

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"Is he?"

"You mean you've never heard of Pop Wing?" asked Paula incredulously.

"Not guilty," said Mr. Queen. "More plum pudding, please."

"The Perennial Alumnus? The Boy Who Never Grew Up?"

"Thank you," said Mr. Queen. "I beg your pardon?"

"The Ghost of Exposition Park and the LA Coliseum, who holds a life seat for all USC football games? The unofficial trainer, rubber, water-boy, pep-talker, Alibi Ike, booster, and pigskin patron-in-chief to the Trojan eleven? Percy Squires 'Pop' Wing, Southern California '04, the man who sleeps, eats, and breathes only for Trojan victories and who married and, failing a son, created a daughter for the sole purpose of snaring USC's best fullback in years?"

"Peace, peace; I yield", moaned Mr. Queen, "before the crushing brutality of the characterization. I now know Percy Squires Wing as I hope never to know anyone again."

"Sorry!" said Paula, rising briskly. "Because directly after you've filled your bottomless tummy with plum pudding we're going Christmas calling on the great man."

"No!" said Mr. Queen with a shudder.

"You want to see the Rose Bowl game, don't you?"

"Who doesn't? But I haven't been able to snag a brace of tickets for love or money."

"Poor Queenie," purred Miss Paris, putting her arms about him. "You're *so* helpless. Come and watch me wheedle Pop Wing out of two seats for the game!"

The lord of the château whose towers rose from a magnificently preposterous parklike estate in Inglewood proved to be a flat-bellied youngster of middle age, almost as broad as he was tall, with a small bald head set upon small ruddy cheeks, so that at first glance Mr. Queen thought he was viewing a Catawba grape lying on a boulder.

They came upon the millionaire seated on his hams in the centre of a vast lawn, arguing fiercely with a young man who by his size—which was herculean—and his shape—which was cuneiform—and his colouring—which was coppery—could



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only be of the order *footballis*, and therefore Mr. Wing's future son-in-law and the New Year's Day hope of the Trojans.

They were manipulating wickets, mallets, and croquet balls in illustration of a complex polemic which apparently concerned the surest method of frustrating the sinister quarterback of the Carolina eleven, Ostermoor.

A young lady with red hair and a saucy nose sat cross-legged on the grass near by, her soft blue eyes fixed on the brown face of the young man with that naked worshipfulness young ladies permit themselves to exhibit in public only when their young men have formally yielded. This, concluded Mr. Queen without difficulty, must be the daughter of the great man and Mr. Roddy Crockett's fiancée, Joan Wing.

Mr. Wing hissed a warning to Roddy at the sight of Mr. Queen's unfamiliar visage, and for a moment Mr. Queen felt uncomfortably like a spy caught sneaking into the enemy's camp. But Miss Paris hastily vouched for his devotion to the cause of Troy, and for some time there were Christmas greetings and introductions, in the course of which Mr. Queen made the acquaintance of two persons whom he recognized instantly as the hybrid genus *house-guest perennialis*. One was a bearded gentleman with high cheek-bones and a Muscovite manner (pre-Soviet) entitled the Grand Duke Ostrov; the other was a thin, dark, whiplike female with inscrutable black eyes who went by the astonishing name of Madame Mephisto.

These two barely nodded to Miss Paris and Mr. Queen; they were listening to each word which dropped from the lips of Mr. Percy Squires Wing, their host, with the adoration of novitiates at the feet of their patron saint.

The noble Trojan's ruddiness of complexion, Mr. Queen pondered, came either from habitual exposure to the outdoors or from high blood-pressure; a conclusion which he discovered very soon was accurate on both counts, since Pop Wing revealed himself without urging as an Izaak Walton, a golfer, a Nimrod, a mountain-climber, a polo-player, and a racing yachtsman; and he was as squirmy and excitable as a small boy.

The small-boy analogy struck Mr. Queen with greater force when the Perennial Alumnus dragged Mr. Queen off

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to inspect what he alarmingly called "my trophy room". Mr. Queen's fears were vindicated; for in a huge vaulted chamber presided over by a desiccated, gloomy, and monosyllabic old gentleman introduced fantastically as "Gabby" Huntswood, he found himself inspecting as heterogeneous and remarkable an assemblage of junk as ever existed outside a small boy's dream of Paradise.

Postage-stamp albums, American college banners, mounted wild-animal heads, a formidable collection of match-boxes, cigar bands, stuffed fish, World War trench helmets of all nations . . . all were there; and Pop Wing beamed as he exhibited these priceless treasures, scurrying from one collection to another and fondling them with such ingenuous pleasure that Mr. Queen sighed for his own lost youth.

"Aren't these objects too—er—valuable to be left lying around this way, Mr. Wing?" he inquired politely.

"Hell, no. Gabby's more jealous of their safety than I am!" shouted the great man. "Hey, Gabby?"

"Yes, sir," said Gabby; and he frowned suspiciously at Mr. Queen.

"Why, Gabby made me instal a burglar-alarm system. Can't see it, but this room's as safe as a vault."

"Safer," said Gabby, glowering at Mr. Queen.

"Think I'm crazy, Queen?"

"No, no," said Mr. Queen, who meant to say "Yes, yes".

"Lots of people do," chuckled Pop Wing. "Let 'em. Between 1904 and 1924 I just about vegetated. But something drove me on. Know what?"

Mr. Queen's famous powers of deduction were unequal to the task.

"The knowledge that I was making enough money to retire a young man and kick the world in the pants. And I did! Retired at forty-two and started doing all the things I'd never had time or money to do when I was a shaver. Collecting things. Keeps me young! Come here, Queen, and look at my *prize* collection." And he pulled Mr. Queen over to a gigantic glass case and pointed gleefully, an elder Penrod gloating over a marbles haul.

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From his host's proud tone Mr. Queen expected to gaze upon nothing less than a collection of the royal crowns of Europe. Instead, he saw a vast number of scuffed, streaked, and muddy footballs, each carefully laid upon an ebony rest, and on each a legend lettered in gold leaf. One that caught his eye read: ROSE BOWL, 1930. USC 47-PITT 14. The others bore similar inscriptions.

"Wouldn't part with 'em for a million dollars," confided the great man. "Why, the balls in this case represent every Trojan victory for the past fifteen years!"

"Incredible!" exclaimed Mr. Queen.

"Yes, sir, right after every game they win the team presents old Pop Wing with the pigskin. What a collection!" And the millionaire gazed worshipfully at the unlovely oblate spheroids.

"They must think the world of you at USC."

"Well, I've sort of been of service to my Alma Mater," said Pop Wing modestly, "especially in football. Wing Athletic Scholarship, you know; Wing Dorm for Varsity athletes; and so on. I've scouted prep schools for years, personally; turned up some mighty fine Varsity material. Coach is a good friend of mine. I guess"—and he drew a happy breath—"I can have just about what I damn well ask for at the old school!"

"Including football tickets?" said Mr. Queen quickly, seizing his opportunity. "Must be marvellous to have that kind of drag. I've been trying for days to get tickets for the game."

The great man surveyed him. "What was your college?"

"Harvard," said Mr. Queen apologetically. "But I yield to no man in my ardent admiration of the Trojans. Darn it, I did want to watch Roddy Crockett mop up those Spartan upstarts."

"You did, huh?" said Pop Wing. "Say, how about you and Miss Paris being my guests at the Rose Bowl Sunday?"

"Couldn't think of it——" began Mr. Queen mendaciously, already savouring the joy of having beaten Miss Paris, so to speak, to the turnstiles.

"Won't hear another word." Mr. Wing embraced Mr. Queen. "Say, long as you'll be with us, I'll let you in on a little secret."

"Secret?" wondered Mr. Queen.

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"Rod and Joan", whispered the millionaire, "are going to be married right after the Trojans win next Sunday!"

"Congratulations. He seems like a fine boy."

"None better. Hasn't got a cent, you understand—worked his way through—but he's graduating in January and . . . shucks! he's the greatest fullback the old school ever turned out. We'll find something for him to do. Yes, sir, Roddy's last game . . ." The great man sighed. Then he brightened. "Anyway, I've got a hundred-thousand dollar surprise for my Joanie that ought to make her go right out and raise another triple-threat man for the Trojans!"

"A—how much of a surprise?" asked Mr. Queen feebly.

But the great man looked mysterious. "Let's go back and finish cooking that boy Ostermoor's goose!"

New Year's Day was warm and sunny; and Mr. Queen felt strange as he prepared to pick up Paula Paris and escort her to the Wing estate, from which their party was to proceed to the Pasadena stadium. In his quaint Eastern fashion, he was accustomed to don a mountain of sweater, scarf, and overcoat when he went to a football game; and here he was *en route* in a sports jacket!

"California, thy name is Iconoclast," muttered Mr. Queen, and he drove through already agitated Hollywood streets to Miss Paris's house.

"Heavens," said Paula, "you can't barge in on Pop Wing that way."

"What way?"

"Minus the Trojan colours. We've got to keep on the old darlin's good side, at least until we're safely in the stadium. Here!" And with a few deft twists of two lady's handkerchiefs Paula manufactured a breast-pocket kerchief for him in cardinal and gold.

"I see you've done yourself up pretty brown," said Mr. Queen, not unadmiringly; for Paula's figure was the secret envy of many better-advertised Hollywood ladies, and it was clad devastatingly in a cardinal-and-gold creation that was a cross between a suit and a dirndl, to Mr. Queen's inexperienced eye, and it was topped off with a perky, feathery hat

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perched nervously on her blue-black hair, concealing one bright eye.

"Wait till you see Joan," said Miss Paris, rewarding him with a kiss. "She's been calling me all week about *her* clothes problem. It's not every day a girl's called on to buy an outfit that goes equally well with a football game and a wedding." And as Mr. Queen drove off towards Inglewood she added thoughtfully: "I wonder what that awful creature will wear. Probably a turban and seven veils."

"What creature?"

"Madame Mephisto. Only her real name is Suzie Lucadamo, and she quit a dumpy little magic and mind-reading vaudeville act to set herself up in Seattle as a seeress—you know, we positively guarantee to pierce the veil of the Unknown? Pop met her in Seattle in November during the USC-Washington game. She wangled a Christmas-week invitation out of him for the purpose, I suppose, of looking over the rich Hollywood sucker-field without cost to herself."

"You seem to know a lot about her."

Paula smiled. "Joan Wing told me some—Joanie doesn't like the old gal nohow—and I dug out the rest . . . well, you know, darling, I know everything about *everybody*."

"Then tell me," said Mr. Queen, "who exactly is the Grand Duke Ostrov?"

"Why?"

"Because", replied Mr. Queen grimly, "I don't like His Highness, and I do like—heaven help me!—Pop Wing and his juvenile amusements."

"Joan tells me Pop likes you, too, the fool! I guess in his adolescent way he's impressed by a real, live detective. Show him your G-man badge, darling." Mr. Queen glared, but Miss Paris's gaze was dreamy. "Pop may find it handy having you around to-day, at that."

"What d'ye mean?" asked Mr. Queen sharply.

"Didn't he tell you he had a surprise for Joan? He's told everyone in Los Angeles, although no one knows what it is but your humble correspondent."

"And Roddy, I'll bet. He did say something about a 'hundred-thousand-dollar surprise'. What's the point?"

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"The point is", murmured Miss Paris, "that it's a set of perfectly matched star sapphires."

Mr. Queen was silent. Then he said: "You think Ostrov——"

"The Grand Duke", said Miss Paris, "is even phonier than Madame Suzie Lucadamo Mephisto. *His* name is Louie Batterson, and he hails from the Bronx. Everybody knows it but Pop Wing." Paula sighed. "But you know Hollywood—live and let live; you may need a sucker yourself some day. Batterson's a high-class deadbeat. He's pulled some awfully aromatic stunts in his time. I'm hoping he lays off our nostrils this sunny day."

"This", mumbled Mr. Queen, "is going to be one heck of a football game, I can see that."

Bedlam was a cloister compared with the domain of the Wings. The interior of the house was noisy with decorators, caterers, cooks, and waiters; and with a start Mr. Queen recalled that this was to be the wedding day of Joan Wing and Roddy Crockett.

They found their party assembled in one of the formal gardens—which, Mr. Queen swore to Miss Paris, outshone Fontainebleau—and apparently Miss Wing had solved her dressmaking problem, for while Mr. Queen could find no word to describe what she was wearing, Mr. Roddy Crockett could, and the word was "sockeroo".

Paula went into more technical raptures, and Miss Wing clung to her gridiron hero, who looked a little pale; and then the pride of Troy went loping off to the wars, leaping into his roadster and waving farewell with their cries of good cheer in his manly, young, and slightly mashed ears.

Pop Wing ran down the driveway after the roadster, bellowing: "Don't forget that Ostermoor defence, Roddy!"

And Roddy vanished in a trail of dusty glory; the noblest Trojan of them all came back shaking his head and muttering: "It ought to be a pipe!"; flunkies appeared bearing mounds of canapés and cocktails; the Grand Duke, regally Cossack in a long Russian coat gathered at the waist, amused the company with feats of legerdemain—his long soft hands were very fluent—and Madame Mephisto, minus the seven veils but, as

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predicted, wearing the turban, went into a trance and murmured that she could see a "glorious Trojan vic-to-ree"—all the while Joan Wing sat smiling dreamily into her cocktail and Pop Wing pranced up and down vowing that he had never been cooler or more confident in his life.

And then they were in one of Wing's huge seven-passenger limousines—Pop, Joan, the Grand Duke, Madame, Gabby, Miss Paris, and Mr. Queen—bound for Pasadena and the fateful game.

And Pop said suddenly: "Joanie, I've got a surprise for you."

And Joan dutifully looked surprised, her breath coming a little faster; and Pop drew out of the right-hand pocket of his jacket a long leather case, and opened it, and said with a chuckle: "Wasn't going to show it to you till to-night, but Roddy told me before he left that you look so beautiful I ought to give you a preview as a reward. From me to you, Joanie. Like 'em?"

Joan gasped: "*Like* them!" and there were exclamations of "Oh!" and "Ah!", and they saw lying upon black velvet eleven superb sapphires, their stars winking royally—a football team of perfectly matched gems.

"Oh, *Pop!*" moaned Joan, and she flung her arms about him and wept on his shoulder, while he looked pleased and blustery, and puffed and closed the case and returned it to the pocket from which he had taken it.

"Formal opening to-night. Then you can decide whether you want to make a necklace out of 'em or a bracelet or what." And Pop stroked Joan's hair while she sniffled against him; and Mr. Queen, watching the Grand Duke Ostrov, *né* Batterson, and Madame Mephisto, *née* Lucadamo, thought they were very clever to have concealed so quickly those involuntary expressions of avarice.

Surrounded by his guests, Pop strode directly to the Trojans' dressing-room, waving aside officials and police and student athletic underlings as if he owned the Rose Bowl and all the multitudinous souls besieging it.

The young man at the door said: "Hi, Pop," respectfully,

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and admitted them under the envious stares of the less fortunate mortals outside.

"Isn't he grand?" whispered Paula, her eyes like stars; but before Mr. Queen could reply there were cries of: "Hey! Femmes!" and "Here's Pop!" and the Coach came over, wickedly straight-arming Mr. Roddy Crockett, who was lacing his doeskin pants, aside, and said with a wink: "All right, Pop. Give it to 'em."

And Pop, very pale now, shucked his coat and flung it on a rubbing table; and the boys crowded round, very quiet suddenly; and Mr. Queen found himself pinned between a mountainous tackle and a behemoth of a guard who growled down at him: "Hey, you, stop squirming. Don't you see Pop's gonna make a speech?"

And Pop said, in a very low voice: "Listen, gang. The last time I made a dressing-room spiel was in '33. It was on a January first, too, and it was the day USC played Pitt in the Rose Bowl. That day we licked 'em thirty-three to nothing."

Somebody shouted: "Yay!" but Pop held up his hand.

"I made three January first speeches before that. One was in '32, before we knocked Tulane over by a score of twenty-one to twelve. One was in 1930, the day we beat the Panthers forty-seven to fourteen. And the first was in '23, when we took Penn State by fourteen to three. And that was the first time in the history of Rose Bowl that we represented the Pacific Coast Conference in the inter-sectional classic. There's just one thing I want you men to bear in mind when you dash out there in a few minutes in front of half of California."

The room was very still.

"I want you to remember that the Trojans have played in four Rose Bowl games. And I want you to remember that the Trojans have *won* four Rose Bowl games," said Pop.

And he stood high above them, looking down into their intent young faces; and then he jumped to the floor, breathing heavily.

Hell broke loose. Boys pounded him on the back; Roddy Crockett seized Joan and pulled her behind a locker; Mr. Queen found himself pinned to the door, hat over his eyes,



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by the elbow of the Trojan centre, like a butterfly to a wall; and the Coach stood grinning at Pop, who grinned back, but tremulously.

"All right, men," said the Coach. "Pop?" Pop Wing grinned and shook them all off, and Roddy helped him into his coat, and after a while Mr. Queen, considerably the worse for wear, found himself seated in Pop's box directly above the 50-yard line.

And then, as the two teams dashed into the Bowl across the brilliant turf, to the roar of massed thousands, Pop Wing uttered a faint cry.

"What's the matter?" asked Joan quickly, seizing his arm. "Aren't you feeling well, Pop?"

"The sapphires," said Pop Wing in a hoarse voice, his hand in his pocket. "They're gone."

Kick-off! Twenty-two figures raced to converge in a tumbling mass, and the stands thundered, the USC section fluttering madly with flags . . . and then there was a groan that rent the blue skies, and deadly, despairing silence.

For the Trojans' safety man caught the ball, started forward, slipped, the ball popped out of his hands, the Carolina right end fell on it—and there was the jumping, gleeful Spartan team on the Trojans' 9-yard line, Carolina's ball, first down, and four plays for a touchdown.

And Gabby, who had not heard Pop Wing's exclamation, was on his feet shrieking: "But they can't *do* that! Oh, heavens—— Come *on*, USC! Hold that line!"

Pop glanced at Mr. Huntswood with bloodshot surprise, as if a three-thousand-year-old mummy had suddenly come to life; and then he muttered: "Gone. Somebody's—picked my pocket."

"*What!*" whispered Gabby; and he fell back, staring at his employer with horror.

"But thees ees fantastic," the Grand Duke exclaimed.

Mr. Queen said quietly: "Are you positive, Mr. Wing?"

Pop's eyes were on the field, automatically analysing the play; but they were filled with pain. "Yes, I'm sure. Some pickpocket in the crowd . . ."

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"No," said Mr. Queen.

"Ellery, what do you mean?" cried Paula.

"From the moment we left Mr. Wing's car until we entered the Trojan dressing-room we surrounded him completely. From the moment we left the Trojan dressing-room until we sat down in this box we surrounded him completely. No, our pickpocket is one of this group, I'm afraid."

Madame Mephisto shrilled: "How dare you! Aren't you forgetting that it was Mr. Crockett who helped Mr. Wing on with his coat in that dressing-room?"

"You——" began Pop in a growl, starting to rise.

Joan put her hand on his arm and squeezed, smiling at him. "Never mind her, Pop."

Carolina gained two yards on a plunge through centre. Pop shaded his eyes with his hand, staring at the opposing lines.

"Meester Queen," said the Grand Duke coldly, "that ees an insult. I demand we all be—how you say?—searched."

Pop waved his hand wearily. "Forget it. I came to watch a football game." But he no longer looked like a small boy.

"His Highness's suggestion", murmured Mr. Queen, "is an excellent one. The ladies may search one another; the men may do the same. Suppose we all leave here together—in a body—and retire to the rest-rooms?"

"Hold 'em," muttered Pop, as if he had not heard. Carolina gained two yards more on an off-tackle play. Five yards to go in two downs. They could see Roddy Crockett slapping one of his linesmen on the back.

The lines met, and buckled. No gain.

"D'ye see Roddy go through that hole?" muttered Pop.

Joan rose and, rather imperiously, motioned Madame and Paula to precede her. Pop did not stir. Mr. Queen motioned to the men. The Grand Duke and Gabby rose. They all went quickly away.

And still Pop did not move. Until Ostermoor rifled a flat pass into the end zone, and a Carolina end came up out of the ground and snagged the ball. And then it was Carolina 6, USC 0, the big clock indicating that barely a minute of the first quarter's playing time had elapsed.

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*"Block that kick!"*

Roddy plunged through the Spartan line and blocked it. The Carolina boys trotted back to their own territory, grinning.

"Hmph," said Pop to the empty seats in his box; and then he sat still and simply waited, an old man.

The first quarter rolled along. The Trojans could not get out of their territory. Passes fell incomplete. The Spartan line held like iron.

"Well, we're back," said Paula Paris. The great man looked up slowly. "We didn't find them."

A moment later Mr. Queen returned, herding his two companions. Mr. Queen said nothing at all; he merely shook his head, and the Grand Duke Ostrov looked grandly contemptuous, and Madame Mephisto tossed her turbaned head, angrily. Joan was very pale; her eyes crept down the field to Roddy, and Paula saw that they were filled with tears.

Mr. Queen said abruptly: "Will you excuse me, please?" and left again with swift strides.

The first quarter ended with the score still 6 to 0 against USC and the Trojans unable to extricate themselves from the menace of their goal-post . . . pinned back with inhuman regularity by the sharp-shooting Mr. Ostermoor. There is no defence against a deadly accurate kick.

When Mr. Queen returned, he wiped his slightly moist brow and said pleasantly: "By the way, Your Highness, it all comes back to me now. In a former incarnation—I believe in that life your name was Batterson, and you were the flower of an ancient Bronx family—weren't you mixed up in a jewel robbery?"

"Jewel robbery!" gasped Joan, and for some reason she looked relieved. Pop's eyes fixed coldly on the Grand Duke's suddenly oscillating beard.

"Yes," continued Mr. Queen, "I seem to recall that the fence tried to involve you, Your Highness, saying you were the go-between, but the jury wouldn't believe a fence's word, and so you went free. You were quite charming on the stand, I recall—had the courtroom in stitches."

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"It's a damn lie," said the Grand Duke thickly, without the trace of an accent. His teeth gleamed wolfishly at Mr. Queen from their thicket.

"You thieving four-flusher——" began Pop Wing, half-rising from his seat.

"Not yet, Mr. Wing," said Mr. Queen.

"I have never been so insulted——" began Madame Mephisto.

"And you", said Mr. Queen with a little bow, "would be wise to hold your tongue, Madame Lucadamo."

Paula nudged him in fierce mute inquiry, but he shook his head. He looked perplexed.

No one said anything until, near the end of the second quarter, Roddy Crockett broke loose for a 44-yard gain, and on the next play the ball came to rest on Carolina's 26-yard line.

Then Pop Wing was on his feet, cheering lustily, and even Gabby Huntswood was yelling in his cracked, uncoiled voice: "Come on, Trojans!"

"Attaboy, Gabby," said Pop with the ghost of a grin. "First time I've ever seen you excited about a football game."

Three plays netted the Trojans 11 yards more: first down on Carolina's 15-yard line! The half was nearly over. Pop was hoarse, the theft apparently forgotten. He groaned as USC lost ground, Ostermoor breaking up two plays. Then, with the ball on Carolina's 22-yard line, with time for only one more play before the whistle ending the half, the Trojan quarterback called for a kick formation and Roddy booted the ball straight and true between the uprights of the Spartans' goal.

The whistle blew. Carolina 6, USC 3.

Pop sank back, mopping his face. "Have to do better. That damn Ostermoor! What's the matter with Roddy?"

During the rest period Mr. Queen, who had scarcely watched the struggle, murmured: "By the way, Madame, I've heard a good deal about your unique gift of divination. We can't seem to find the sapphires by natural means; how about the supernatural?"

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Madame Mephisto glared at him. "This is no time for jokes!"

"A true gift needs no special conditions," smiled Mr. Queen.

"The atmosphere—scarcely propitious——"

"Come, come, Madame! You wouldn't overlook an opportunity to restore your host's hundred-thousand-dollar loss?"

Pop began to inspect Madame with suddenly keen curiosity.

Madame closed her eyes, her long fingers at her temples. "I see," she murmured, "I see a long jewel-case . . . yes, it is closed, closed . . . but it is dark, very dark . . . it is in a—yes, a dark place . . ." She sighed and dropped her hands, her dark lids rising. "I'm sorry. I can see no more."

"It's in a dark place, all right," said Mr. Queen dryly.

"It's in my pocket." And to their astonishment he took from his pocket the great man's jewel-case.

Mr. Queen snapped it open. "Only," he remarked sadly, "it's empty. I found it in a corner of the Trojans' dressing-room."

Joan shrank back, squeezing a tiny football charm so hard it collapsed. The millionaire gazed stonily at the parading bands blaring around the field.

"You see," said Mr. Queen, "the thief hid the sapphires somewhere and dropped the case in the dressing-room. And we were all there. The question is: Where did the thief cache them?"

"Pardon me," said the Grand Duke. "Eet seems to me the theft must have occurred in Meester Wing's car, after he returned the jewel-case to his pocket. So perhaps the jewels are hidden in the car."

"I have already," said Mr. Queen, "searched the car."

"Then in the Trojan dressing-room!" cried Paula.

"No, I've also searched there—floor to ceiling, lockers, cabinets, clothes, everything. The sapphires aren't there."

"The thief wouldn't have been so foolish as to drop them in an aisle on the way to this box," said Paula thoughtfully. "Perhaps he had an accomplice—"

"To have an accomplice," said Mr. Queen wearily, "you must know you are going to commit a crime. To know that you must know there will be a crime to commit. Nobody but

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Mr. Wing knew that he intended to take the sapphires with him to-day—is that correct, Mr. Wing?”

“Yes,” said Pop. “Except Rod—— Yes. No one”

“Wait!” cried Joan passionately. “I know what you’re all thinking. You think Roddy had—had something to do with this. I can see it—yes, even you, Pop! But don’t you see how silly it is? Why should Rod steal something that will belong to him anyway? I *won’t* have you thinking Roddy’s a thief!”

“I did not,” said Pop feebly.

“Then we’re agreed the crime was unpremeditated and that no accomplice could have been provided for,” said Mr. Queen. “Incidentally, the sapphires are not in this box. I’ve looked.”

“But it’s ridiculous!” cried Joan. “Oh, I don’t care about losing the jewels, beautiful as they are; Pop can afford the loss; it’s just that it’s such a mean, dirty thing to do. Its very cleverness makes it dirty.”

“Criminals”, drawled Mr. Queen, “are not notoriously fastidious, so long as they achieve their criminal ends. The point is that the thief has hidden those gems somewhere—the place is the very essence of his crime, for upon its simplicity and later accessibility depends the success of his theft. So it’s obvious that the thief’s hidden the sapphires where no one would spot them easily, where they’re unlikely to be found even by accident, yet where he can safely retrieve them at his leisure.”

“But heavens,” said Paula, exasperated, “they’re not in the car, they’re not in the dressing-room, they’re not on any of us, they’re not in this box, there’s no accomplice . . . it’s impossible!”

“No,” muttered Mr. Queen. “Not impossible. It was done. But how? How?”

The Trojans came out fighting. They carried the pigskin slowly but surely down the field towards the Spartans’ goal line. But on the 21-yard stripe the attack stalled. The diabolical Mr. Ostermoor, all over the field, intercepted a forward pass on third down with eight yards to go, ran the ball back 51 yards, and USC was frustrated again.

The fourth quarter began with no change in the score; a feeling that was palpable settled over the crowd, a feeling that

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they were viewing the first Trojan defeat in Rose Bowl history. Injuries and exhaustion had taken their toll of the Trojan team; they seemed dispirited, beaten.

"When's he going to open up?" muttered Pop. "That trick!" And his voice rose to a roar. "Roddy! Come on!"

The Trojans drove suddenly with the desperation of a last strength. Carolina gave ground, but stubbornly. Both teams tried a kicking duel, but Ostermoor and Roddy were so evenly matched that neither side gained much through the interchange.

Then the Trojans began to take chances. A long pass—successful. Another!

"Roddy's going to town!"

Pop Wing, sapphires forgotten, bellowed hoarsely; Gabby shrieked encouragement; Joan danced up and down; the Grand Duke and Madame looked politely interested; even Paula felt the mass excitement stir her blood.

But Mr. Queen sat frowning in his seat, thinking and thinking as if cerebration were a new function to him.

The Trojans clawed closer and closer to the Carolina goal line, the Spartans fighting back furiously but giving ground, unable to regain possession of the ball.

First down on Carolina's 19-yard line, with seconds to go!

"Roddy, the kick! The kick!" shouted Pop.

The Spartans held on the first plunge. They gave a yard on the second. On the third—the inexorable hand of the big clock jerked towards the hour mark—the Spartans' left tackle smashed through USC's line and smeared the play for a 6-yard loss. Fourth down, seconds to go, and the ball on Carolina's 24-yard line!

"If they don't go over next play", screamed Pop, "the game's lost. It'll be Carolina's ball and they'll freeze it . . . Roddy!" he thundered. "*The kick play!*"

And, as if Roddy could hear that despairing voice, the ball snapped back, the Trojan quarterback snatched it, held it ready for Roddy's toe, his right hand between the ball and the turf . . . Roddy darted up as if to kick, but as he reached the ball he scooped it from his quarterback's hands and raced for the Carolina goal line.

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"It worked!" bellowed Pop. "They expected a place kick to tie—and it worked! *Make it, Roddy!*"

USC spread out, blocking like demons. The Carolina team was caught completely by surprise. Roddy wove and slithered through the bewildered Spartan line and crossed the goal just as the final whistle blew.

"We win! We win!" cackled Gabby, doing a war dance.

"Yowie!" howled Pop, kissing Joan, kissing Paula, almost kissing Madame.

Mr. Queen looked up. The frown had vanished from his brow. He seemed serene, happy.

"Who won?" asked Mr. Queen genially.

But no one answered. Struggling in a mass of worshippers, Roddy was running up the field to the 50-yard line; he dashed up to the box and thrust something into Pop Wing's hands, surrounded by almost the entire Trojan squad.

"Here it is, Pop," panted Roddy. "The old pigskin. Another one for your collection, and a honey! Joan!"

"Oh, Roddy."

"My boy——" began Pop, overcome by emotion; but then he stopped and hugged the dirty ball to his breast.

Roddy grinned and, kissing Joan, yelled: "Remind me that I've got a date to marry you to-night!" and ran off towards the Trojan dressing-room followed by a howling mob.

"Ahem!" coughed Mr. Queen. "Mr. Wing, I think we're ready to settle your little difficulty."

"Huh?" said Pop, gazing with love at the filthy ball. "Oh." His shoulders sagged. "I suppose", he said wearily, "we'll have to notify the police——"

"I should think", said Mr. Queen, "that that isn't necessary, at least just yet. May I relate a parable? It seems that the ancient city of Troy was being besieged by the Greeks, and holding out very nicely, too; so nicely that the Greeks, who were very smart people, saw that only guile would get them into the city. And so somebody among the Greeks conceived a brilliant plan, based upon a very special sort of guile; and the essence of this guile was that the Trojans should be made to do the very thing the Greeks had been unable to do themselves. You will recall that in this the Greeks were successful,



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since the Trojans, overcome by curiosity and the fact that the Greeks had sailed away, hauled the wooden horse with their own hands into the city and, lo! that night, when all Troy slept, the Greeks hidden within the horse crept out, and you know the rest. Very clever, the Greeks. May I have that football, Mr. Wing?"

Pop said dazedly: "Huh?"

Mr. Queen, smiling, took it from him, deflated it by opening the valve, unlaced the leather thongs, shook the limp pigskin over Pop's cupped hands . . . and out plopped the eleven sapphires.

"You see," murmured Mr. Queen, as they stared speechless at the gems in Pop Wing's shaking hands, "the thief stole the jewel-case from Pop's coat pocket while Pop was haranguing his beloved team in the Trojan dressing-room before the game. The coat was lying on a rubbing table and there was such a mob that no one noticed the thief sneak over to the table, take the case out of Pop's coat, drop it in a corner after removing the sapphires, and edge his way to the table where the football to be used in the Rose Bowl game was lying, still uninflated. He loosened the laces surreptitiously, pushed the sapphires into the space between the pigskin wall and the rubber bladder, tied the laces, and left the ball apparently as he had found it.

"Think of it! All the time we were watching the game, the eleven sapphires were in this football. For one hour this spheroid has been kicked, passed, carried, fought over, sat on, smothered, grabbed, scuffed, muddled—with a king's ransom in it!"

"But how did you know they were hidden in the ball," gasped Paula, "and who's the thief, you wonderful man?"

Mr. Queen lit a cigarette modestly. "With all the obvious hiding-places eliminated, you see, I said to myself: 'One of us is a thief, and the hiding-place must be accessible to the thief after this game.' And I remembered a parable and a fact. The parable I've told you, and the fact was that after every winning Trojan game the ball is presented to Mr. Percy Squires Wing."

"But you can't think——" began Pop, bewildered.

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"Obviously you didn't steal your own gems," smiled Mr. Queen. "So, you see, the thief had to be someone who could take equal advantage with you of the fact that the winning ball is presented to you. Someone who saw that there are two ways of stealing gems; to go to the gems, or to make the gems come to you.

"And so I knew that the thief was the man who, against all precedent and his taciturn nature, has been volubly imploring the Trojan team to win this football game; the man who knew that if the Trojans won the game the ball would immediately be presented to Pop Wing, and who gambled upon the Trojans; the man who saw that, with the ball given immediately to Pop Wing, he, and he exclusively, custodian of Pop's wonderful and multifarious treasures, could retrieve the sapphires safely unobserved—grab the old coot, Your Highness!—Mr. Gabby Huntswood."

# THE FOOTBALL PHOTOGRAPH

BY

H. C. BAILEY

*from Mr. Fortune Explains*

MR. FORTUNE INVESTIGATES A BURGLARY AND FINDS A  
FOOTBALLER

*In Reggie Fortune H. C. Bailey has created one of the best-known characters in English detective fiction, and The Football Photograph is one of the best examples of Mr. Fortune's methods.*

THE shop of Durfey and Killigrew sold jewellery to Queen Anne. Perhaps it was a little dowdy even then. Its low-browed windows are not for the smart or the millionaire, but for people who want value for money. Yet Durfey and Killigrew show some perception of the progress of mankind since Queen Anne's death. The doors and windows of their shop are closed with rolling steel shutters.

It was a Monday morning in August. Mr. Fortune was explaining to Mrs. Fortune without hope that duty would prevent his going to the house in Scotland to which she had promised to take him. A place in which there is nothing to do but take exercise he considers bad for his constitution, and the conversation of country houses weakens his intellect. All this he set forth plaintively to Mrs. Fortune, and she said, "Don't blether, child," and the telephone rang.

Reggie contemplated that instrument with a loving smile. "How wonderful are the works of science, Joan. What a beneficent invention." He jumped at it. "Yes, Fortune speaking. What? Durfey and Killigrew? Of course I know 'em. My grandmother bought me studs there. Like warming-pans. Burglary? Yes, I'll come if you want me. Not much in my way, is it? Oh, all right." He turned to Mrs. Fortune. "Well, well. Duty, Joan, 'Duty, stern daughter of the voice of God'; thou dost preserve the stars from wrong—me too, darling."

## A MR. FORTUNE STORY

"Pig," said she. "You are a fraud, Reggie."

"Oh no. No deception. Some poor beggar's been killed." He kissed her hair. He departed.

The roll shutters of Durfey and Killigrew were still down when his taxi came to the shop.

The lights were on inside. Some men were crowded into a corner, talking softly, watching others who moved about the shop. From behind the counter rose the square form of Superintendent Bell. Reggie came to his beckoning finger. It pointed down to the space between the counter and the unrobbed showcase of silver on the wall. A man lay there in what had been a pool of blood. He wore a long coat of olive green with purple cuffs and collar. "It's the porter, sir," said Bell.

Reggie crouched over the body. Its brow was torn and bruised, but the blood came from a wound in the throat. He worked upon both. . . . The clenched hands and the blood on their knuckles interested him. . . . From the man's coat he scraped something sticky and shapeless and put it in a specimen box. He opened the dead mouth.

Then he stood up and gazed round the shop. "Well, well," he murmured. "Too many people."

"That's the manager and the assistants, sir." Bell nodded at the group in the corner. "Waiting to check what's been taken. And we'll have to check them off, too."

"Oh yes. Yes. But there must be an office or something. Shut 'em up there." So the staff of Durfey and Killigrew's was removed while Reggie contemplated the dead man with large and dreamy eyes.

Bell came back briskly. "Well, sir, what about it?"

"Has he been moved?" said Reggie.

"They say this is where they found him."

"Yes. It could be," Reggie murmured. He wandered away, bent and poring over the floor. He dropped on hands and knees. His finger-tips moved upon the linoleum. He stooped close, he cut some small pieces out of it. "Yes, blood, I think. I'll verify it. But I should say this is where he was knocked on the head." Reggie sat on his heels and looked up at Superintendent Bell with plaintive wonder.

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"What was he doing here at all?"

"Ah. If we knew that we'd know something. He didn't live here. Nobody lives here. He wasn't the watchman. They don't have one. He doesn't lock up. There's always two of 'em do that together, manager and one of the assistants. He was just the porter. He pulled down the shutters and made 'em fast one o'clock Saturday and went off home. That's the routine. Then the other chaps went out through the side-door there. Come and have a look, sir. See? The shutter comes down over the entrance and is fastened to the floor with those bolts inside. That little door in it lets 'em out and when they're outside they lock that up. Well, they went off like that on Saturday and the manager swears there was nobody left in the shop. When he came this morning, the door was still locked all right, but as soon as he got inside he saw the place had been robbed. Then he found the porter lying dead behind the counter." Bell put his head on one side and looked at his Mr. Fortune with a paternal smile. "Now, sir, the place was still locked up safe, but the porter had got inside and been killed and somebody had gone off with a bag full of jewellery. Do you see how it was done?"

"Not wholly. No."

Bell chuckled. "Ah. It beats Mr. Fortune! Then I'm going to get some of my own back for once. Look here, sir." He bent to the bolts which should have held the shutter to the floor.

"Oh, that," Reggie murmured. "I saw that when I came in. Some fellow's cut through the bolts. From outside. There's a mark or two on the base of the shutter. What was the tool? I don't do much burglary myself."

"Thank Heaven there's something you don't know," Bell growled. "Yes, it was a queer tool. A cold chisel uncommon long and thin—they slid it under the shutter and hammered it through the bolts. And that's pretty queer, too. These fellows knew just what they needed to make a short cut into this funny old shop; they got their tool made and they had the almighty cheek to stand in the street and hammer at the door."

"Yes, quite bold. But I suppose it wouldn't take long."

"Matter of minutes, sir. Still, hammering at a jeweller's

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door in the open street! It is so blooming impudent. Once they cut the bolts, of course they had a soft job. Ran the shutter up a little, came underneath and——”

“And brought the porter in to kill him. Yes. All very clear, Bell.”

“I don’t know what the porter was doing, sir. That beats me.”

“I wouldn’t say that,” Reggie murmured. “I think I know what he was doing, Bell. But why did he come inside? And why did they kill him? Not according to plan. Some error. I should look into the porter.” He gazed at Bell dreamily. “By the way, what are you looking into?”

“Everything, as you might say. We haven’t got a line yet. No finger-prints. Glove job. Professionals, of course. We’ll have to put some work in. It’s a kind of insult to the police, breaking in in this bare-faced way. When I told Mr. Lomas he said it was the most infernal impudence of his wretched career.”

“Yes. Yes. It is cheek.” Reggie nodded. “I feel that. I don’t like being ignored myself. I’ll go and sympathize. When you’ve looked up the porter’s record you might come along.”

The Hon. Sidney Lomas at his desk was surprised by the touch of a gentle hand.

“Alas, my poor brother!” Reggie sighed.

“Ha, Reginald! Bell said he would get you on to it. Good man!”

“I am. But unrecognized. Treated as negligible. Same like you, Lomas. I resent this.”

“Deuced impudent, isn’t it? Burgle a West End jeweller’s from the street with a hammer. Damme, it’s defying the whole police force.”

“Yes. Not respectful. I think there were precautions, you know. Still, not nice of ’em. But they’ve behaved shocking to me. Killing a poor wretch crude and casual in the course of the job as if they could get away with a murder as easy as nothing. My only aunt! I exist, I suppose; I am still extant.”

“My dear fellow,” Lomas chuckled, “highly extant.”

“Yes. Yes, I think so. I resent being ignored by an elementary person with a cold chisel.”

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"By all means. And what are you going to do about it, Reginald? "

"Well, I was going to provide some work for our active intelligent police force. There are one or two little points left lying about by our nasty friend with the cold chisel. Hallo, here's Bell, nice and quick."

"Got the outlines, sir. Pretty well all the jewellery in the place is gone, except some things in the safe. That's not been touched. The silver and gold plate seems all there. You might say they cleared out the light stuff. The manager puts it at ten thousand pounds provisional."

"And very nice, too." Lomas smiled. "All anywhere by now. Looks easy, doesn't it, Bell? Mr. Fortune says he has some work for you."

"I thought he had," Bell said gloomily. "I can see plenty of work myself. But nothing that leads anywhere. What's your line, sir?"

"It's the porter, you know," Reggie murmured.

"The manager says he'd answer for him absolutely. Been employed a dozen years. Always straight."

"Poor beggar," Reggie sighed. "And how does the manager think he came to be inside, Bell?"

"The idea is, he saw something wrong at the side-door and came inside to see what was up and the burglars killed him."

Lomas nodded. "Reasonable enough. We've had cases like it before. What's the matter, Reginald?"

"Well, you haven't, you know. Not cases like this. Think again, Lomas. At one o'clock Saturday the porter went off duty. The first thing he ought to do is to get out of his highly coloured livery. By the way, where is his home? What about his people? Nobody's reported him missing and he's been dead since Saturday."

"Has he, though?" said Lomas quickly.

"Oh yes. Yes. Forty hours or more. His blood's been drying quite a long time."

"Nobody reported him missing because he lived alone," said Bell. "Rooms in workmen's dwellings, Clerkenwell. No family."

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Reggie sighed. "We don't have much luck. Well, well. He didn't go home and change on Saturday. He hung about. The burglars couldn't begin to work till everybody was well away from the shop. Nevertheless, when they did begin the porter was handy in his livery all complete. What about it, Lomas?"

"You mean he was an accomplice."

"Yes. That is indicated. If he wasn't—why did he go in? Suppose he saw the fellows at work—the natural thing is to challenge 'em and make a row. Suppose he came along when they'd gone inside—they wouldn't have left the shutter up, and while it's down nothing shows. He must have been an accomplice or he wouldn't have gone in. And that explains the remarkable cheek of hammering at the door in the street. Nobody would interfere with them while Durfey and Killigrew's own porter stood by. They'd pass for lawful workmen mending the shutters."

"You've got it, sir," Bell cried. "That's neat."

"Yes. I am neat," Reggie sighed. "So were they. Up to a point. Then the thing got away with 'em."

"Yes, sir. That often happens in crime," Bell said solemnly.

"When you two have finished chirping at each other!" Lomas cut in. "It isn't so dam' clear, Reginald. Take it your way. The porter was an accomplice. He stood by to guarantee them while they forced the shutter. Good. That explains their confounded cheek very nicely. But it don't explain in the least why he went in after 'em. Or why they killed him."

"No. I noticed that," Reggie murmured. "I don't know everything, Lomas; I don't know why he went in. Not according to plan, I think. Some error."

"You might take it he went in to see how much they got," Bell suggested. "So he shouldn't be done out of his fair share of the swag. And there was a row about it and they did him in. We've had cases like that, sir."

"Yes, it could be," Reggie murmured.

"Yes, I dare say you're right, Bell." Lomas settled deeper in his chair. "That'll do for a theory. Quite nice. But it's only a theory. It doesn't give you anything to work on."

"I never thought it did," Bell said gloomily. "One of those cases where you've got a lot of donkey work. It was a



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professional job and well planned out beforehand. We'll have to go through all the burglars on the list. I don't mind owning, there's nothing in it that's any fellow's particular style. It's too simple."

"Simplicity is the mark of ability," Reggie mumbled.

"I dare say. You are often obscure, Reginald." Lomas yawned and lit a cigarette. "Same old game, what? Same dull old game. Sorry, Bell. You're in for it."

Reggie reached for a cigar. "Thank you so much. Yes." He lay back and blew smoke rings. "'Do the work that's nearest. Though it's dull at times,'" he murmured. "The nearest, Lomas old thing. I don't like burglars. I want a murderer."

"Quite. Very proper taste. Happy to oblige. Name and address, please?"

"I don't know his name. Or his address. He's a shortish man, agile, of considerable strength; he has dark red hair which is rather long and oiled, and he has lost a triangular piece from one of the two middle teeth in his upper jaw. At this moment he has a bruised cut on his face. And he uses chewing-gum."

"Good gad!" said Lomas. "Were you there?"

"Do you mean there was only one man in it, sir?" Bell cried.

"Oh no. No. He had a companion. I don't know much about him. He was heavier and I should think older. But the little man did the killing. The porter came in, and they were all three together in the middle of the shop, and there was a quarrel. The small man got his face punched—the porter's knuckles are broken and there was some red hair in the blood. The porter also hit the little man in the mouth and broke his tooth, and the beggar spat out blood and chewing-gum and the bit of tooth, and it all stuck on the porter. Then the little man got some long weapon and hit him on the head. He fell stunned. They hid him behind the counter, and to make sure jabbed him in the throat with a sharp long tool. No doubt it was that long chisel they had made for the job."

"Thank you. Very brilliant, Reginald. And now all we have to do is to find a little man with red hair and a broken tooth. That's going to be quite easy."

"It is wonderful what you get, sir," Bell said reverently.

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"Quite," Lomas chuckled. "Makes me feel like the man in the play when they show him Peter Pan's shadow. 'It's nobody I know.'"

"No. You're not suspected at present," Reggie murmured. "Any other helpful suggestions? I want to get on."

"Quite. Very right and proper. Where to?"

"I was thinking of the porter's humble home."

"Man there, sir," said Bell.

"Good. May I go and help him?"

Lomas chuckled. "By all means. If there's anything else you want to do, don't mind us. We like it. Forgive our existence, Reginald."

"My dear chap! Oh, my dear chap!" Reggie stood up and contemplated him benignly. "It's beautiful."

"Thanks so much. Sometimes something seems to say that you feel the Department superfluous."

"Oh no. No. Who ran to lift me when I fell and kissed the place to make it well? My Lomas! Come on, Bell."

The workmen's dwelling in Clerkenwell where the porter lived stood in a by-way, a drab, respectable mass. Children swarmed in the courtyard. The clean staircase was full of the steam of washing-day. "Not the sort of place for a crook, sir," Bell muttered.

"He wasn't," said Reggie.

The porter's rooms were at the top. A detective opened the door to them. "No fresh news of him, sir. The woman below comes in and cleans up for him twice a week. She was here Saturday morning, and saw him go off, and the bed's not been slept in since. Down at the office they say he's lived here a matter of ten years." He looked round the room. "Decent place in a plain way."

The porter had taken some pride in it. The room smelt fresh and clean, its scanty furniture was in good order—he had curtains up, and a picture or two.

Reggie looked at them with some care. Reggie stared at the wall. "Well, well," he murmured, and went into the bedroom. That had no decorations but a coloured print of the King. Its furniture was a bed and a chest of drawers. Reggie opened one after the other. The first was empty. The others contained

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a few clothes. He came back to the other room where the detective was conferring with Bell. "Have you found anything?"

"No, sir, nothing. He doesn't seem to have had any papers at all. There's nowhere for 'em to be."

Bell shook his head. "Somebody's been here before us, Mr. Fortune."

"Yes. That is indicated. I was wondering what they came for. Ask the woman who did the rooms to come up."

She came, a large woman wiping red arms on her apron, breathing hard. "There's something you can tell us, I think," said Reggie amiably. "Has anything gone from this poor chap's rooms?"

She snorted. "Wodsher mean gawn? I ain't took nuffink. Ain't never been in the place since Sat'dy. Tike my dyin' oaf I ain't."

"Of course you haven't. We want to know if anybody else has. And there's only you who can tell us what was in his rooms before he was killed."

"Can I? Dunno so much. I ain't no Nosey Parker. I never poked into 'is fings." She fixed Reggie with a choleric eye. "'E didn't 'ave no golden jools lyin' abaht. 'E kep' 'is bit o' money in the top drawer."

"Just show us, will you?" Reggie murmured.

She waddled into the bedroom. She opened the drawer. "Lummy, it's gawn," she wheezed. "Bit of a tin box it was, guv'nor, so big. I swear it was vere last week."

"Did you ever see it open, mother?" said Bell.

"Yus, I seen it. 'E 'ad 'is money in it and some bits o' pipers."

"They got away with his papers, then. Thank you, mother, that's all." He led the way back to the sitting-room.

"One moment," Reggie murmured. "One moment. Has anything else been taken?"

"Ardsher mean?" she wheezed. "Ain't nuffink else to tike only 'is bits o' sticks." But Reggie was looking round the room, and she stared about her with puzzled eyes.

"What about the pictures?" said Reggie.

"Gorblime." she gasped. "One of 'is picshers is gone. 'Ere.

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'E 'ad one 'angin' up 'ere. Yer can see w'ere ve nile wos, guv'nor."

"Yes, I did see," Reggie smiled.

"Nah, w'at'd anyone want to tike that for?"

"I wonder. What was it?"

"Jest a blinkin' set o' footballers."

"A football team. Was he in it?"

"Not 'im, no. Don't know none of 'em. Don't know w'at 'e 'ad it for."

"Any name to it?"

"I don't know. Yus. Some nime. Couldn't tell yer. But w'at the 'ell does anyone want to pinch a blinkin' photo of footballers for?"

"Quite so. Yes," Reggie murmured. "Don't you worry. Thanks very much." And with professional exhortations not to talk about it Bell got rid of her.

Then he stared heavily at Reggie. "And what's going to happen next, if you please? I begin the day with a murder and a ten-thousand-pound burglary and come on to a stolen football photo."

"Yes. Yes. Very careful mind at work," Reggie smiled. "Quite a pleasure to deal with him."

"Deal with him! He's dealing with us all right. But we don't get near him. He breaks up every clue before we find it."

"I wouldn't say that. No. I wouldn't say that. Dangerous move destroying clues, Bell. He had to, of course. He couldn't let us see that photo. But he's told us he was in it."

"What, you mean the chap that did the murder was one of this football team? That's only a guess, sir."

"Quite."

"Well, suppose he was. You set me to look for a red-haired man with a broken tooth; now you've got it he plays football. I dare say. But it leaves me a nice long job."

"Yes. Yes," Reggie agreed cheerfully. "Better look for a short cut. Somebody at the shop ought to know where the porter had his drop of beer. You might find out what football team was his fancy. Good-bye."

The interesting thing about this case, he has been heard to say, is that it provides some justification for the existence of an

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expensive police force. He will explain that he always thought he would want to have the Department in his theory up to the neck or they would not have gone through with it. In fact, he took the case as a game of chess (Lomas says a game of poker), which is not his habit. He was for once without emotions. And Bell and his men worked like beavers, and Reggie saw his wife off to Scotland and played with biochemistry and his marionette theatre.

After some days Lomas rang him up. "Is that you, Reginald? Good. Come round, will you. Bell thinks he's on to something."

Reggie went round. Bell was conferring with Lomas more solemnly than ever. "Well, well. And are we yet alive and see each other's face? How do you do, Bell?"

"I've had a heavy week, sir. Now, take it from the beginning. We've found a clerk who was working after hours in an office by Durfey and Killigrew's that Saturday afternoon. When he went home he noticed some men hammering at the shop door. Thought it was a bit queer, so he had a look at 'em. Didn't look much because he saw Durfey's porter standing by and supposed it must be all right. But he noticed there were two of 'em, and one was a little chap with red hair. Well, then, we've got on to a chap who's caretaker at a block of offices round the corner. He came along between three and four o'clock. There was nobody at Durfey's door then, but he saw the porter hanging about in a doorway opposite. Bit surprised to see him in uniform so late on a Saturday. He called out something about it, and he thought the porter was a bit short with him.

"Yes. He would be," Reggie murmured.

"All fits what you said," Bell nodded. "The porter was there in his uniform so that nobody should meddle with 'em while they were breaking in. If anything was said about it afterwards I suppose he'd have sworn it wasn't him, it was somebody in a sham uniform. That's been done before. But this chap came by who knew him and could swear he was outside while the burglary was being done. He got the wind up and went in to warn his pals. Most likely he wanted 'em to clear off

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without the swag to save his face. Then there was a row and they did him in. I dare say it all happened like that."

"Some error and the thing got away with them," Lomas chuckled. "Your game, Reginald. You told us so and you told us right."

"No butter, thank you," Reggie murmured. "What's the matter with our Superintendent?"

"I don't like a case to look so neat when I'm only halfway through it. Pretty often I've found, if we've got a theory all fixed up half-way, in the end it turns out we made a big bloomer. You know that, too. You're fond of having us on that way."

"Oh, Bell! Oh, my Bell! How can you? I never did. I only look beyond a theory when it don't take in all the evidence."

"You're satisfied, Reginald?" Lomas nodded. "So am I. This is good enough to go on with, Bell."

"I don't say it isn't, sir," Bell frowned. "But Mr. Fortune talks about taking in all the evidence. That's the trouble. I don't know if we have." He turned to Reggie. "Mr. Lomas thinks I've got a bee in my bonnet. But I put it to you, the chances are these two chaps that were seen had someone else in the job with 'em. A big jewel robbery has to be worked out very careful, to study the place and fix up the plans and to get rid of the stuff afterwards."

"Of course there was somebody behind 'em," said Lomas impatiently. "Some fence in a large way of business. We'll stick to the red-haired footballer, please."

"Yes, I think so," Reggie murmured.

But Bell was stubborn. "I'm not talking about a fence, sir. What if there was another man actually in the job, Mr. Fortune? It's like this. Yesterday we had notice a man who lived in Barkham Mansions, Marble Arch, was missing."

"Quite a gentlemanly address."

"Yes, sir. But he was last seen that Saturday afternoon. Harvey Stroud was the name he used, and we don't know it, and we can't recognize his description. But he was in touch with a diamond merchant in Amsterdam that does some very shady business, and he kept an outfit that'd come in useful for

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burglary. He's vanished absolutely. Him and his car. Ever since that Saturday."

"Yes. Very interesting. What was he like?"

"Dark chap, going bald. Smiled a lot, showed his teeth. Several gold ones. Tall and thin. Very spry. Any age."

Reggie shook his head. "I don't think so, Bell. The other man in the shop had large flat feet. And the gentlemanly Mr. Harvey Stroud don't sound like a chap to hammer at a street door. He may have gone off with the swag. I'd like my red-haired little friend first, thank you."

"Quite, just my view." Lomas rubbed his hands. "We'll get on with him, Bell."

"Oh! Are you getting warm?" said Reggie.

"I hope so. Bell's put in very sound work. But he's never happy unless he has a certainty."

"I like to be sure it's a fact," Bell grumbled.

Reggie looked at him with half-shut eyes. "Which do you mean? Sure a man ought to be hanged, or sure you can get him hanged? Well, what have you got, Bell?"

"It's going like this, sir. We've got a man who saw a motor-bike with side-car left in Broadlands Rents that afternoon. You know the place. Light vans and such get parked there ordinary weekdays, nothing much on Saturdays. So he noticed it. And he saw two fellows go off with it. Each of 'em was carrying a workman's toolbasket. He thought they looked like builders' men. But the one that rode the bike was a little chap with red hair. Do you notice, Mr. Fortune, these chaps that saw 'em can't tell us anything about the other?"

"Yes. Rather a pity. I should say he was somebody who looked the ordinary British workman. Any further trace of our red-haired friend?"

"He goes off on the motor-bike and we lose him. But there's the football clue, sir." He stopped. "You know this is all your case really. Everything we've got is what you made for us."

"Oh no. No. Not my case. Not in my way at all," said Reggie quickly. "It's a job for the whole Department."

"Quite, quite," Lomas agreed. "Building things up."

Bell glanced at him. "Yes, sir," he said respectfully. "Well, this is what we've built up, Mr. Fortune. The porter used to

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have his dinner at a little eating-house round the corner. And they say there he talked a lot of football, and his pet club was London City. They got into the Final of the Cup last year, you know. Well, their outside left is a little red-haired man, Percy Clark."

"And is Mr. Clark known to the police?" Reggie asked.

"Not at all, sir. He's in the regular team, though he isn't a professional. And you can take it First League football players don't do much crime. They train too hard."

"Mr. Clark plays as an amateur. Yes. And how does he get his living?"

"He's got a business of his own, sir; motor and cycle depot; specializes in motor-bikes."

"Well, well!" Reggie murmured, and Lomas laughed. "It does all fit, doesn't it, Bell?"

"You mean he could ha' made that queer long chisel they used in his own workshop. Yes, I thought of that. But it is quite a respectable business, old standing; his father had it before him."

"Yes. Yes." Reggie smiled. "What are his teeth like?"

Bell breathed hard. "Ah. I reckon that's up to you, sir. I've had some fellows look at him, but all they can say is he has a scar on his face, healing. Playing football, he might get that easy."

"Do they play football in August?"

"Oh yes, sir. Practice games. League season begins before summer's over. What I was thinking—his team has a practice game this evening—if you'd come up and have a look at him."

"If you like. Anything I can do," said Reggie meekly. "What about it, Lomas?"

"Safety-first idea, isn't it?" Lomas shrugged. "But there's no harm in looking him over beforehand. I take it the thing turns on his tooth. If he's lost the piece you found, then we've got him cold. If he hasn't, then we shall have to work up something more."

"I don't know about working up," Bell grumbled. "We shall want something more. I thought of taking the chap who saw the burglars at work up to the ground to see if he could identify Clark."



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"Oh no. No. I wouldn't do that," Reggie said hastily. "It's not fair, Bell. The red-haired man he saw was in ordinary clothes. Mr. Clark may look very different stripped for football. Try him in a regular identification parade."

"Very good, sir," Bell frowned. "You don't mind my saying so, but you're uncommon careful to have us do everything in the regulation routine way for you in this case."

"It's that kind of case, you know." Reggie was plaintive.

"Quite," Lomas approved. "Quite. You're perfectly right, my dear fellow."

The huge amphitheatre of the London City ground was sparsely populated for that practice match. Two men who strolled in just before the kick-off had no difficulty in finding places against the rails. The players ran on to the field and lined up. The red head of Percy Clark glistened in the sun.

"Yes. Quite oily," Reggie murmured. "And the right red, thank you." He smiled. "Cut over the eye nearly gone. Sturdy little wretch, isn't he?"

"He could have struck that blow?" Bell said under his breath.

"Oh lord, yes! Just the man. Short and powerful. I told you he would be. Quick on his feet, isn't he?" Clark was making rings round the opposing half. "That also. Oh, damn!" Clark had come into contact with the back. They had some badinage.

"I didn't see," Bell muttered. "What is it? Tooth there, sir?"

"No. The whole tooth's gone. He's had it out, confound him." He turned away.

"What do you want to do now, sir?" Bell said when they reached the street.

"Carry on, carry on. You'll have to ask Mr. Clark to come to Scotland Yard, and if he won't come—take him."

That night two grave men called on Percy Clark in the neat little house beside his garage. They asked him to come and give Superintendent Bell a little information. He laughed. He wanted to know what about. They said the Superintendent would tell him. He replied that he had no time to go running round to police stations. They said he would have to make it. He went with them.

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"Cut it short, will you, old friend?" He greeted Bell jauntily. "I'm a busy man."

"All right," said Bell. "You just tell me what you were doing the afternoon of Saturday the 20th."

"I don't think!" Clark winked. "Want to pinch me for something, do you? Nothing doing, old bean. There's been too much in the papers about what a chap gets by talking to the police."

"You can't account for your time that afternoon?"

"Not 'arf," said Clark. "I'm saying nothing, mate."

"If you're innocent, you're a fool," Bell frowned.

"You've got nothing against me. I know that. Not being a fool, old friend, I'm not going to help you fake up a charge. Got that? Now, what about it?"

"You'll be detained as a suspected person," said Bell.

"What of?" said Clark.

"You'll hear when the time comes."

In the morning, Bell put him up for identification by the man who had seen the burglars at work and the man who saw two workmen go off with a motor-bike and a side-car. Both of these witnesses picked him out, both declared that they had seen a little man with red hair like his. Neither would say he was the man. His house and his garage were searched and such a tool as the long chisel which had been used in the burglary was found: more than one queer tool of no lawful use.

Then Bell charged him with burglary and murder, and he grinned and asked to see his solicitor.

Reggie was called out of his laboratory to the telephone. "Well, Reginald, Mr. Percy Clark is going to be put through it," said the voice of Lomas. "In the police court to-morrow. Happy now?"

"Not happy, no. Tranquil. I thought you'd have to."

"Quite. You're satisfied? Good. So am I. Come round, will you? The Public Prosecutor wants to talk."

Reggie came into a room which seemed to be occupied by a large man in front of the fireplace, who lectured.

"Oh, my aunt!" Reggie moaned. "Lomas—oh, you are there. I couldn't see you for the noise. Hallo, Bell! You look

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disgruntled." He turned at last to Mr. Montagu Finchampstead, the Public Prosecutor. "What's the matter with you, Finch?"

"He's explaining that he doesn't think much of the case," said Lomas.

"Fancy that," Reggie murmured. "Haven't we been correct, Lomas? How would Finch have done it?"

"The question is not how I should have done it, but whether the evidence you have will obtain a conviction. And——"

"Is it?" said Lomas. "I should say if the police have good evidence a man was guilty of murder he ought to go for trial."

"Good evidence, yes," Finchampstead fumed. "There's practically nothing but Fortune's story."

"My what?" Reggie was hurt. "I don't tell stories, Finch."

"We have some other striking facts," said Lomas. "A man very like this chap was on the scene of the murder. He has the motor-bike equipment and the burglarious tools which the murderer required. He's a footballer, and a football photo was stolen from the murdered man's room after the crime."

"A lot of detail," Finchampstead snorted.

"Of course it's detail," said Lomas. "Every case is made up of detail: and when each scrap fits the cumulative force is strong."

"The only clear evidence you've got is Fortune's statement about the hair and the piece of tooth. And in my opinion it's not satisfactory."

"Thank you for all these kind words," Reggie murmured. "Why isn't it satisfactory? The murderer left hair on the dead man's fist which is just the colour of Percy Clark's. He left a bit of a front tooth, and Percy has lost all that tooth."

"Just so. All of it," said Finchampstead. "Which means that the bit you found is not evidence against him at all. A man can't have something broken off a tooth he hasn't got."

"How true, Finch! How brilliant!" Reggie looked at him reverently. "But don't you see, dear, that raises the little questions, when did he have that tooth taken out, and why did he have that tooth taken out? For he had his front teeth all present and correct quite recently. I've found a smiling photograph."

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"That's right, sir," Bell nodded. "In the football papers. And I've found customers of his who want to swear he hasn't lost a front tooth at all."

"Satisfied now?" Lomas smiled.

Finchampstead scowled at him. "No, I am not satisfied. I am bound to say the evidence is inadequate."

"Now, what exactly do you mean, Finch?" Reggie murmured. "That you don't think Percy was the murderer or that you don't think you can make a jury say he was?"

Finchampstead hesitated. "You show a strong probability. But I have to make a proof, Fortune."

Lomas laughed. "You admit it's a case for trial."

"I agree we must go through with it." Finchampstead rose. "Don't forget we have no idea what his defence is going to be."

"No. Not a notion," Reggie murmured. "That'll make it very interesting."

The conference broke up. But Bell took Reggie aside. "Mr. Fortune, do you believe this man's guilty?" he said.

"Oh yes. Absolutely. Not a doubt. Why?"

Bell drew a long breath. "Well, I'm glad. I did think you were keeping out of it: leaving it all to us."

"Yes." He looked at Bell with half-shut eyes. "It makes you all nice and keen. I couldn't force a prosecution. But Lomas can. And he has."

The arrest of a First League player for murder was a fortune to newspapers in the depths of the silly season. The great heart of the people was taught to yearn over Percy Clark. Pages of stories, pages of pictures, set forth his deeds on the football field, his beauty and his charm. He became a popular hero persecuted by the police.

The prosecution went on its slow prosaic way. Before the magistrate an old solicitor of renown in criminal cases appeared for Mr. Clark, played lightly with the evidence against him and announced that he would reserve his defence. Mr. Clark was committed for trial.

When the case came on, a crowd fought to get into the court, a crowd remained outside. The driest, hardest little Judge on the bench took the case. "Looks in form," Lomas smiled. "He'll hang the fellow if he can."

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"He will keep the jury to the evidence," said Finchampstead with dignity, glancing at the fleshy advocate who was leading for the defence.

But Mr. Justice Blackshaw had no chance for his noted snubs. Sir Edward Pollexfen did not use the melodramatic style which has made him the idol of the criminal classes. He took the case as quietly as the neat counsel for the prosecution. The dangerous evidence of Reggie did not excite him, his cross-examination treated Mr. Fortune with careless respect. "Your evidence is that the murderer had red hair and lost a portion of a tooth in his struggle with the dead man. Very good. I suggest that many men have red hair, Mr. Fortune."

"Yes. Not so many this shade of red."

"Still, a good many. You produce one hair and a piece of a front tooth. You don't suggest that piece is missing from any of the prisoner's teeth."

"Not from any that he has now. He has had the tooth in the position from which this piece came removed."

"If he had lost that tooth before the murder, this piece cannot be his?"

"If he had," said Reggie, and was told that was all.

Lomas looked at Finchampstead. "Taking it easy, what?"

"Much too easy," Finchampstead frowned.

Reggie came from the witness-box to sit beside them. "Well, well. I should say we're going to hear some good hard swearing, Finch."

"I should say they have a good answer. I was afraid of that, Fortune."

"Yes, yes. I know you were," Reggie murmured.

The defence continued to take it easy. The men who had seen a red-haired little fellow at the time and place of the murder were let go with the admission that they could not swear to Percy Clark. The woman telling of the stolen football photograph was only required to admit she did not know who was in it. The customers of Clark who swore he had had all his teeth till the eve of the murder were contemptuously challenged. Bell's own evidence of strange tools in Clark's workshop was dismissed with a few technical questions to confuse the jury.

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Pollexfen arose to open the defence with expansive confidence. The jury must be amazed at the weakness of the case which they had been brought to hear. In all his long experience he had never known a criminal charge supported by such scanty, flimsy evidence. It would be apparent to them that no rational man could find the prisoner guilty. But his client was not content to be acquitted for lack of evidence against him. He claimed the right to prove his innocence. And he would show that he could have had no part in the crime.

"That means we're going to have an alibi," said Lomas.

But they began with the tooth. Some of the other players in Clark's football team swore that he had an accident in practice the week before the murder and stood out of training.

"Yes, I dare say they're telling the truth," Reggie murmured. "He'd want time off to make his little arrangements."

They testified that Clark had a kick in the face, complained that it had loosened his teeth, told them the front one had gone so shaky he had to pull it out.

"Thus avoiding any dentist's evidence," Reggie murmured.

The prosecuting counsel, going gingerly, brought out that they had no knowledge how the tooth was lost except what Clark had told them.

And then came a man who said he lived at Gilsfield. It is a little place fifty miles out of London, away from main lines and main roads.

Reggie lay back and gazed at him with mild and dreamy eyes.

The man said he was a retired grocer, and he looked it. He had a habit of going out for a stroll and getting a cup of tea at a wayside inn, the "Billhook". He knew Mr. Clark by seeing him there pretty often. He was at the "Billhook" on the Saturday of the murder. He saw Mr. Clark there. Under cross-examination he was sure of the date, but vague about the time. It was tea-time: might have been four or five. "Or six or seven?" counsel suggested. But he was sure it was before the bar opened. The court laughed.

"Pretty vague," said Lomas.

"Yes. Yes. Mr. Clark will want them to do better than that," Reggie murmured, and contemplated the sharp, impudent face in the dock.

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The landlord of the "Billhook" came next, an oldish, fattish man, sweating freely. He also knew Mr. Clark. Mr. Clark often came to the "Billhook" when he was out on his motor-bike. He came that Saturday. Came for a bit o' lunch. Stayed on till it was getting dark. Had a bit o' game with the darts in the afternoon. He knew the date, he'd got it scored up. Mr. Clark lost half a dollar to him and hadn't paid yet. Again the court laughed. And cross-examination made nothing of the landlord. He was anxious to oblige, in the manner of a publican, he wheezed and he sweated, but he stuck to his story.

"So that's that," Reggie murmured, watching him out of the box. "Now, what's little Blackshaw going to do about it?" Pollexfen's speech for the defence took that for granted. He boomed assurance. The charge had collapsed; it was atoms, dust. The prisoner was proved innocent before God and man.

The reply for the prosecution was in a minor key, ironic about alibis, sarcastic upon dentistry by hearsay, bitter in emphasis on the anxiety of someone to destroy the evidence that the murdered man had a footballing friend.

Mr. Justice Blackshaw took snuff. The summing up came in his driest style. The jury would not be misled by counsel's complaints that a grave charge had been made without proof. They would observe that facts had been given in evidence which were in substance unchallenged and which pointed to the prisoner's guilt. They would also observe that evidence had been given to weaken the strongest part of the case and other evidence which would disprove it all. He made it plain that he did not think much of the explanation of the tooth. He treated the alibi with more respect. If they believed the witnesses for the defence, the foundation of the charge, that Clark had been at the shop at the time of the burglary, was destroyed. They must consider that evidence carefully and the evidence as a whole.

"Fair little beggar, isn't he?" Reggie smiled.

"He knows what your evidence is worth," Finchampstead growled. "That's a direction to acquit."

"I know. I know," Reggie murmured. He gazed pensively at the man in the dock. The gap where the tooth had been showed in a queer, sneering grin.

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The jury did not consider long. They came back with a verdict of not guilty, and at the words a cheer rose from the back of the crowded court, rose louder, to the impotent rage of the little Judge, as it was swelled by a boom of cheering from the crowd outside.

"I told you so, Lomas," Finchampstead growled. "You've made a nice thing of it. This is what comes of relying on Fortune's theories."

On the next day a young man on a motor-bicycle stopped at the "Billhook" for lunch. His clothes were loud, his speech Cockney. He confided in the landlord that he was having his fortnight off: mooching round the country on the old jigger: rather thought of putting up somewhere for a bit. The landlord, who looked like the morning after a wet night, said the "Billhook" had no beds. "Sorry. You got some good beer. 'Ave one with me." The landlord had one and another. "Prime stuff. I'll be coming this way again, dad"—the young man winked. "Cheerio!" He rode off and found a bed in Gilsfield. He was Mr. Fortune's chauffeur, Sam, a young man of versatility.

The country round the "Billhook" is lonely, a picturesque and barren region of sandhills which grew heath by nature and have been made to grow larch and pine. Here and there the ponds, which such country is apt to produce, give variety to the vegetation. About this time a botanist, complete with vasculum, was noticed working over the heath. The solitary woodmen and gamekeepers found him affable. He was Mr. Fortune.

Sam continued to mooch round and he often recurred to the bar of the "Billhook", and the men who used it agreed that he was a lad.

From them his bicycle took him often to the hotel in the county town where Mr. Fortune unostentatiously resided.

They had been rusticating thus for something more than a week, and Sam was sitting in the "Billhook" at lunch when he heard the telephone ring. "Yes," the landlord's wheezy voice answered; "yes, this is the 'Billhook'. I'm the landlord. What?" His voice made throaty noises. "Don't know what you mean.



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Who's that speaking? Who is it?" There was a silence. Then a rattling of the telephone. "I say, miss, who was that that rang me up?" And again silence.

Sam finished his lunch and went into the bar. The landlord was gulping down a glass of brandy; his hand shook and his face was a mottled yellow. Sam grinned. "And I'll 'ave a spot o' sloe gin myself, guv'nor." He was served without a word and his money was taken. The landlord watched him go out, shut the door and went back to the telephone.

In the evening Sam related these events to Mr. Fortune. "It gave 'im a rare turn, sir. Pity you can't over'ear what's coming from the other end of the telephone."

"Don't worry," Reggie murmured. "And then?"

"Well, then 'e went back to the telephone and rung up someone and 'ad a long talk. 'E saw me off the premises first careful, so I don't know who that was. But I 'ung about down the road an' presently 'e came out and 'e went walking round by that old pond under the wood. Sort o' mooning about. Didn't do anything. Just starin' like. And then 'e came back lookin' that queer."

Over Reggie's face came a slow benign smile. "No. No. He couldn't do anything," he murmured. "Now we'll do a little more telephoning. Good-bye, Sam. I'm afraid you'll have a night out. I want the 'Billhook' watched to-night."

"All right, sir. I'd love to do the blighter in. The beastly swipes I've drunk in his place! But what do you mean, more telephoning? That message 'e 'ad——"

"Oh yes. Yes. That was me. Good-bye."

As soon as it grew dark Sam went into hiding behind a clump of gorse in the road above the "Billhook". He saw the regular drinkers of that respectable inn arrive and cheerily depart. At the legal hour the "Billhook" closed its door and the light behind the red blind of its bar went out. Two lights upstairs announced that the landlord and his maid-of-all-work had gone to bed. Then those lights also vanished, and the inn was a vague mass in the dark.

The night was silent but for the whirr of bats and an owl hooting. After a while Sam made out the beat of a motor engine far away, a bicycle engine efficiently silenced. It came

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nearer at a great pace, rushed past him, stopped at the inn, and without a knock or a word the door opened and the man and the bicycle were inside.

For a moment Sam thought he heard a car purring down the road, then lost the sound. But soon other faint sounds came. A man was nearly treading on him, a hand felt for him, a torch flashed into his face. "All right, son," a voice whispered. "I'm Bell." The bulk of the Superintendent lay down at Sam's side. "You've got a good nerve. Anything doing?"

"Not 'alf," Sam muttered. "Chap and his motor-bike gone into the pub. Couldn't see him."

They lay there some while longer. Then a light came out of the inn, a stable lantern in a man's hand. He was the landlord. With him walked a smaller man, who carried a spade on his shoulder. They turned off the road. "'Ere,"—Sam gripped at Bell—"goin' down by the pond. That's where the old 'un went this afternoon. What's the game?"

"Shut up," Bell muttered. He let the two go well ahead before he stood up. Four other men rose out of the ground behind him. They moved on towards the pond silently. The lantern-light was glimmering over the water: there was a squelching, splashing sound. The landlord stood in the pond a little way from the bank, digging, and the other man held the lantern. Something came away with a gurgling and sucking which took two hands to lift, was taken out of the water and the landlord hurried away with it, leaving his companion to bring lantern and spade.

As they came, Bell turned his torch on them, and other torches flashed out. They were held in the glare while his men closed. "We're police officers," said Bell, with a heavy grip on the landlord's arm.

"Oh, police, are you?" It was the other man who answered. "Going to make another bloomer, then?"

"I know you, Clárk," Bell said.

"You bloomin' well do, Mr. bloomin' Superintendent. An' you know you can't do anything more against me. I've been found not guilty, I have, and you can't touch me. I know my rights and I ain't going to stand for any rough stuff. Come off it."

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"And this is your alibi," Bell said mildly. "Well, what's he giving us now?" He took from the landlord's shaking arms a big metal box. "Thanks. Bring 'em back to the pub."

"Now, what do you think you're doing?" Clark cried. "You've got no right to pinch me again. You can't touch me. I tell you——" One of the detectives, hustling him along, advised him to stow the gab. "You wait till I get to my lawyer, you bloomin' stiff. I'll have the hide off you for this. I'll have you turned out of the force."

"Want to talk now, Clark?" said Bell. "Let it out. You hadn't much to say last time."

They came into the bar of the "Billhook", and the lamps were lit. Bell looked at his prisoners. The landlord's fat face sagged, pallid. Clark scowled. "Going to give me the key?" Bell tapped the box.

"I dunno nothing about it," the landlord whined. "I—I was jus' keeping it for——"

"Don't you say anything, George," Clark said quickly. "He'll only twist it against you."

"Yes, who were you keeping it for, George?" Bell smiled. There was no answer. "All right. I dare say we can tell you. Put 'em in there." He opened the door of the bar parlour.

"Here, now, wait a bit. What's the charge?" Clark protested.

"Detained on suspicion," Bell said.

"Oh yes, I don't think. You had that before."

"And now I've got some more," Bell said and the two were taken away. "Well, Forbes, what about it?"

One of his men was already opening the box. It was full of a bundle in leather cloth. Out of that came jewellery. Forbes spread out a printed list and began to examine things. "This is Durfey and Killigrew's stuff all right, sir."

"Good work," said Bell, and went to the telephone. "That Mr. Fortune? Bell speaking. We've got 'em, sir. With the stuff. They had it buried in this pond here. What, sir? You don't mean——?" He brushed his hand over his face. "Very good, sir. I'll keep 'em here." He hung up the receiver. He sat down heavily and lit a pipe. It took many matches. . . .

Until dawn they waited in the inn, a long watch broken by

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the complaints of Clark. With the light came a car. Mr. Fortune and Lomas and the Chief Constable of the County. "Hallo, Bell." Reggie was brisk. "Nobody else in the place?"

"There's a woman servant upstairs, Sam says. I haven't got her up, sir. She seems to have slept through it."

"Yes. Been trained not to hear too much. Well, one of your men had better take her off. We shall want her statement. Don't let her see these fellows. I——"

A lorry groaned past the door.

"Well, let's get on, what?" He turned away. "When I want these two beauties I'll whistle."

Through the window of the bar parlour the sharp red face of Mr. Clark could be seen peering after the lorry. It carried some country policemen in uniform. As near the pond as it could get, it stopped. The policemen clambered down and hauled out a cumbrous apparatus of iron and rope.

The Chief Constable strode up to the pond. "It's not so big, Mr. Fortune. We'll soon make sure one way or the other."

"Yes, yes." Reggie walked round the bank and measured distances with his eye. "We're going to make quite sure. They couldn't throw him further than this. Begin from here and work towards that end."

The drags were put in and the constabulary hauled and the black water grew turbid and yellow. The ropes strained. "Got something," the Chief Constable grunted. "Go steady, lads." Out of the depths of the pond into the shallows came a shapeless mass of cloth. Policemen splashed in and lifted on to the bank something that had been a man.

Lomas turned away. The Chief Constable pulled out a flask and drank and passed it to his men. Reggie knelt down by the body. . . . When he stood up again he dabbled his hands in the pond. "Could you blow a whistle, Lomas?" he murmured.

The Chief Constable did that. "Is it the chap you were looking for?"

"Oh yes. Gold teeth, as per invoice. The late Harvey Stroud."

"Was he drowned?" said Lomas.

"No, not drowned. Skull fractured. Injury to bones of the face. Hit and jabbed by hard heavy weapon. Same like the

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porter. Ah, here come the operators." Under the propulsion of Bell's men, Mr. Clark and the landlord reluctantly approached. "Come along," Reggie called. "Just want you to recognize the deceased."

The landlord caught sight of that shapeless face and gave a gasping cry.

"Yes. Your error," Reggie said. He contemplated the little red face of Percy Clark. Its look of impudence was fixed, but his jaws worked fast. "Still chewing gum, Mr. Clark?"

Then Clark swore at him. . . .

That afternoon the Public Prosecutor was asked to come and see the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department. He found Mr. Fortune with Lomas. "My dear old Finch," Reggie beamed. "Journeys end in lovers meetin'. Another nice case for you now."

"Good heavens!" Finchampstead exploded. "Another case of yours? I should have thought that last exhibition was sufficiently ignominious. What is this, now?"

"Percy Clark, dear. Yet once more, oh ye laurels, and once more."

"Are you mad? You can't charge the man again."

"Not the same murder. No. This is another one. And thus we will establish your shaken reputation, Finch."

"My reputation!" Finchampstead gobbled.

"Yes, old thing. Yes, it was too bad." Reggie soothed him.

"But necessary, you know. All for your country's good. We had to prosecute the beggar. We had to make him show his hand. And you did it beautifully, Finch."

"What does this mean, Lomas?" Finchampstead groaned.

"He's quite right," Lomas chuckled. "He generally is, confound him. Don't you see, the prosecution drove Clark into a corner. His only chance was to set up that alibi. And the alibi gave him away."

"It was perjured evidence? I dare say. If you hadn't been so hasty——"

"Not hasty. No. Forcin' the game," Reggie smiled. "When he put that fat landlord into the box, he put the rope round his neck. We had it sworn that he was a pal of the landlord's, and that he'd been at the 'Billhook' on the evening of the

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burglary. So I went down with my chauffeur to look into the landlord. And we found another fellow came to the 'Billhook' that night. A tall, dark fellow, who came in a car, went into a back room with the landlord and Mr. Clark, and was never seen to go away. His car was there days after. Well, you know, there was a man reported missing from that Saturday who had interests in burglary—Mr. Harvey Stroud. Bell was always worrying about him. Bell thought he might be the man who put up the job. It looked as if he was. We knew the murder of the porter wasn't according to plan. If Mr. Stroud came quietly down to the 'Billhook' to collect the swag and found he'd been mixed up in a murder, he wouldn't be pleased. There might well have been a row. Another little affair not according to plan. So I rang up the landlord and said, 'What's become of Harvey Stroud?' Only that and nothing more. Just to see the reaction. He reacted very nicely. He gargled. Then my man saw him go out and wander round the adjacent pond, just looking at things. And then he went back and telephoned to Mr. Clark. Soon as the evening shades prevailed, Clark buzzed down to the 'Billhook'. In the night they went out and dug the swag out of the pond. And Bell got 'em with the goods all present and correct."

"We can convict them of the burglary, then?" said Finchampstead.

"Oh yes. Yes. And the murder of Stroud. We dragged the pond this morning."

"I always knew that rascal Clark was guilty," Finchampstead announced.

"Yes, I think so," Mr. Fortune murmured. "One of my neater cases. Pure art. No vulgar emotion."

# HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER

BY

DASHIELL HAMMETT

*from Collier's, February 17, 1934*

DASHIELL HAMMETT WOULDN'T SOLVE THIS PRIZEFIGHT  
MYSTERY! CAN YOU?

*Here is our nomination for the prizefighting detective story of this volume. Paradoxically, there is no detective in this story of Mr. Hammett's. But there is a detective outside this story: you, the reader. Read it as if you were more than an armchair detective: read it as if you were a detective in real life, investigating a realistic crime, and the events that led up to it. Read it carefully; it is one of Mr. Hammett's finest yarns. . . . Strangely enough, the manly art of fisticuffs has not enthralled detective short story writers. Aside from Herbert Jenkins' The Missing Heavyweight (from Malcolm Sage, Detective), and our own Mind Over Matter (from The New Adventures of Ellery Queen), we know of few others. . . . We can only indulge in literary fantasy and make the wistful wish that Ernest Hemingway's superb prize-ring story, Fifty Grand, and those excellent pugilistic short stories of James T. Farrell (creator of Studs Lonigan), contained detectives!*

I knew what a lot of people said about Loney but he was always swell to me. Ever since I remember he was swell to me and I guess I would have liked him just as much even if he had been just somebody else instead of my brother; but I was glad he was not just somebody else.

He was not like me. He was slim and would have looked swell in any kind of clothes you put on him, only he always dressed classy and looked like he had stepped right out of the bandbox even when he was just loafing around the house, and he had slick hair and the whitest teeth you ever saw and long, thin, clean-looking fingers. He looked like the way I remembered my father, only better-looking. I took more after

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Ma's folks, the Malones, which was funny because Loney was the one that was named after them, Malone Bolan. He was smart as they make them, too. It was no use trying to put anything over on him and maybe that was what some people had against him, only that was kind of hard to fit in with Pete Gonzalez.

Pete Gonzalez not liking Loney used to bother me sometimes because he was a swell guy, too, and he was never trying to put anything over on anybody. He had two fighters and a wrestler named Kilchak and he always sent them in to do the best they could just like Loney sent me in. He was the topnotch manager in our part of the country and a lot of people said there was no better anywhere, so I felt pretty good about him wanting to handle me, even if I did say no.

It was in the hall leaving Tubby White's gym that I ran into him that afternoon and he said, "Hello, Kid, how's it?" moving his cigar further over in a corner of his mouth so he could talk.

"Hello. All right."

He looked me up and down, squinting on account of the smoke from his cigar. "Going to take this guy Saturday?"

"I guess so."

He looked me up and down again like he was weighing me in. His eyes were little enough anyhow and when he squinted like that you could hardly see them at all. "How old are you, Kid?"

"Going on nineteen."

"And you'll weigh about a hundred and sixty," he said.

"Sixty-seven and a half. I'm growing pretty fast."

"Ever see this guy you're fighting Saturday?"

"No."

"He's plenty tough."

I grinned and said, "I guess he is."

"And plenty smart."

I said, "I guess he is," again.

He took his cigar out of his mouth and scowled at me and said like he was sore at me, "You know you got no business in the ring with him, don't you?" Before I could think up anything to say he stuck the cigar back in his mouth and his



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face and his voice changed. "Why don't you let me handle you, Kid? You got the stuff. I'll handle you right, build you up, not use you up, and you'll be good for a long trip."

"I couldn't do that," I said. "Loney taught me all I know and——"

"Taught you what?" Pete snarled. He looked mad again. "If you think you been taught anything at all you just take a look at your mug in the next looking-glass you come across." He took the cigar out of his mouth and spit out a piece of tobacco that had come loose. "Only eighteen years old and ain't been fighting a year and look at the mug on him!"

I felt myself blushing. I guess I was never any beauty but, like Pete said, I had been hit in the face a lot and I guess my face showed it. I said, "Well, of course, I'm not a boxer."

"And that's the God's truth," Pete said. "And why ain't you?"

"I don't know. I guess it's just not my way of fighting."

"You could learn. You're fast and you ain't dumb. What's this stuff getting you? Every week Loney sends you in against some guy you're not ready for yet and you soak up a lot of fists and——"

"I win, don't I?" I said.

"Sure you win—so far—because you're young and tough and got the moxie and can hit, but I wouldn't want to pay for winning what you're paying, and I wouldn't want any of my boys to. I seen kids—maybe some of them as promising as you—go along the way you're going, and I seen what was left of them a couple of years later. Take my word for it, Kid, you'll do better than that with me."

"Maybe you're right," I said, "and I'm grateful to you and all that, but I couldn't leave Loney. He——"

"I'll give Loney a piece of change for your contract, even if you ain't got one with him."

"No, I'm sorry, I—I couldn't."

Pete started to say something and stopped and his face began to get red. The door of Tubby's office had opened and Loney was coming out. Loney's face was white and you could hardly see his lips because they were so tight together, so I knew he had heard us talking.

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He walked up close to Pete, not even looking at me once, and said, "You chiselling rat."

Pete said, "I only told him what I told you when I made you the offer last week."

Loney said, "Swell. So now you've told everybody. So now you can tell 'em about this." He smacked Pete across the mouth with the back of his hand.

I moved over a little because Pete was a lot bigger than Loney, but Pete just said, "O.K., pal, maybe you won't live forever. Maybe you won't live forever even if Big Jake don't never get hep to the missus."

Loney swung at him with a fist this time but Pete was backing away down the hall and Loney missed him by about a foot and a half, and when Loney started after him Pete turned and ran towards the gym.

Loney came back to me grinning and not looking mad any more. He could change that way quicker than anybody you ever saw. He put an arm around my shoulders and said, "The chiselling rat. Let's blow." Outside he turned me around to look at the sign advertising the fights. "There you are, Kid. I don't blame him for wanting you. There'll be a lot of 'em wanting you before you're through."

It did look swell, KID BOLAN vs. SAILOR PERELMAN, in red letters that were bigger than any of the other names and up at the top of the card. That was the first time I ever had had my name at the top. I thought, I'm going to have it there like that all the time now and maybe in New York sometime, but I just grinned at Loney without saying anything and we went on home.

Ma was away visiting my married sister in Pittsburgh and we had a Negro woman named Susan taking care of the house for us, and after she washed up the supper dishes and went home Loney went to the telephone and I could hear him talking low. I wanted to say something to him when he came back but I was afraid I would say the wrong thing because Loney might think I was trying to butt into his business, and before I could find a safe way to start the doorbell rang.

Loney went to the door. It was Mrs. Schiff, like I had a hunch it would be, because she had come over the first night Ma was away.

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She came in laughing, with Loney's arm around her waist, and said, "Hello, Champ," to me.

I said, "Hello," and shook hands with her.

I liked her, I guess, but I guess I was kind of afraid of her. I mean not only afraid of her on Loney's account but in a different way. You know, like sometimes when you were a kid and you found yourself all alone in a strange neighbourhood on the other side of town. There was nothing you could see to be downright afraid of but you kept halfway expecting something. It was something like that. She was awful pretty but there was something kind of wild-looking about her. I don't mean wild-looking like some floozies you see; I mean almost like an animal, like she was always on the watch for something. It was like she was hungry. I mean just her eyes and maybe her mouth because you could not call her skinny or anything or fat either.

Loney got out a bottle of whisky and glasses and they had a drink. I stalled around for a few minutes just being polite and then said I guessed I was tired and I said good night to them and took my magazine upstairs to my room. Loney was beginning to tell her about his run-in with Pete Gonzalez when I went upstairs.

After I got undressed I tried to read but I kept worrying about Loney. It was this Mrs. Schiff that Pete made the crack about in the afternoon. She was the wife of Big Jake Schiff, the boss of our ward, and a lot of people must have known about her running around with Loney on the side. Anyhow Pete knew about it and he and Big Jake were pretty good friends, besides him now having something to pay Loney back for. I wished Loney would cut it out. He could have had a lot of other girls and Big Jake was nobody to have trouble with, even leaving aside the pull he had down at the City Hall. Every time I tried to read I would get to thinking things like that so finally I gave it up and went to sleep pretty early even for me.

That was a Monday. Tuesday night when I got home from the movies she was waiting in the vestibule. She had on a long coat but no hat, and she looked pretty excited.

"Where's Loney?" she asked, not saying hello or anything.

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"I don't know. He didn't say where he was going."

"I've got to see him," she said. "Haven't you any idea where he'd be?"

"No, I don't know where he is."

"Do you think he'll be late?"

I said, "I guess he usually is."

She frowned at me and then she said, "I've got to see him. I'll wait a little while anyhow." So we went back to the dining-room.

She kept her coat on and began to walk around the room looking at things but without paying much attention to them. I asked her if she wanted a drink and she said, "Yes," sort of absent-minded, but when I started to get it for her she took hold of the lapel of my coat and said, "Listen, Eddie, will you tell me something? Honest to God?"

I said, "Sure," feeling kind of embarrassed looking in her face like that, "if I can."

"Is Loney really in love with me?"

That was a tough one. I could feel my face getting redder and redder. I wished the door would open and Loney would come in. I wished a fire would break out or something.

She jerked my lapel. "Is he?"

I said, "I guess so. I guess he is, all right."

"Don't you know?"

I said, "Sure, I know, but Loney don't ever talk to me about things like that. Honest, he don't."

She bit her lip and turned her back on me. I was sweating. I spent as long a time as I could in the kitchen getting the whisky and things. When I went back in the dining-room she had sat down and was putting lipstick on her mouth. I set the whisky down on the table beside her.

She smiled at me and said, "You're a nice boy, Eddie. I hope you win a million fights. When do you fight again?"

I had to laugh at that. I guess I had been going around thinking that everybody in the world knew I was going to fight Sailor Perelman that Saturday just because it was my first main event. I guess that is the way you get a swelled head. I said, "This Saturday."

"That's fine," she said, and looked at her wrist-watch.

## OUTDOOR SPORTS

"Oh, why doesn't he come? I've got to be home before Jake gets there." She jumped up. "Well, I can't wait any longer. I shouldn't have stayed this long. Will you tell Loney something for me?"

"Sure."

"And not another soul?"

"Sure."

She came around the table and took hold of my lapel again. "Well, listen. You tell him that somebody's been talking to Jake about—about us. You tell him we've got to be careful, Jake'll kill both of us. You tell him I don't think Jake knows for sure yet, but we've got to be careful. Tell Loney not to phone me and to wait here till I phone him to-morrow afternoon. Will you tell him that?"

"Sure."

"And don't let him do anything crazy."

I said, "I won't." I would have said anything to get it over with.

She said, "You're a nice boy, Eddie," and kissed me on the mouth and went out of the house.

I did not go to the door with her. I looked at the whisky on the table and thought maybe I ought to take the first drink of my life, but instead I sat down and thought about Loney. Maybe I dozed off a little but I was awake when he came home and that was nearly two o'clock.

He was pretty tight. "What the hell are you doing up?" he said.

I told him about Mrs. Schiff and what she told me to tell him.

He stood there in his hat and overcoat until I had told it all, then he said, "That chiselling rat," kind of half under his breath and his face began to get like it got when he was mad.

"And she said you mustn't do anything crazy."

"Crazy?" He looked at me and kind of laughed. "No, I won't do anything crazy. How about you scrambling off to bed?"

I said, "All right," and went upstairs.

The next morning he was still in bed when I left for the gym and he had gone out before I got home. I waited supper for him until nearly seven o'clock and then ate it by myself.

## HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER

Susan was getting sore because it was going to be late before she got through. Maybe he stayed out all night but he looked all right when he came in Tubby's the next afternoon to watch me work out, and he was making jokes and kidding along with the fellows hanging around there just like he had nothing at all on his mind.

He waited for me to dress and we walked over home together. The only thing that was kind of funny, he asked me, "How do you feel, Kid?" That was kind of funny because he knew I always felt all right. I guess I never even had a cold all my life.

I said, "All right."

"You're working good," he said. "Take it easy to-morrow. You want to be rested up for this baby from Providence. Like that chiselling rat said, he's plenty tough and plenty smart."

I said, "I guess he is. Loney, do you think Pete really tipped Big Jake off about——"

"Forget it," he said. "Hell with 'em." He poked my arm. "You got nothing to worry about but how you're going to be in there Saturday night."

"I'll be all right."

"Don't be too sure," he said. "Maybe you'll be lucky to get a draw."

I stopped still in the street, I was so surprised. Loney never talked like that about any of my fights before. He was always saying, "Don't worry about how tough this mug looks, just go in and knock him apart," or something like that.

I said, "You mean——?"

He took hold of my arm to start me walking again. "Maybe I overmatched you this time, Kid. This sailor's pretty good. He can box and he hits a lot harder than anybody you been up against so far."

"Oh, I'll be all right," I said.

"Maybe," he said, scowling straight ahead. "Listen, what do you think about what Pete said about you needing more boxing?"

"I don't know. I don't ever pay any attention much to what anybody says but you."

"Well, what do you think about it now?" he asked.

## OUTDOOR SPORTS

"Sure, I'd like to learn to box better, I guess."

He grinned at me without moving his lips much. "You're liable to get some fine lessons from this sailor whether you want 'em or not. But no kidding, suppose I told you to box him instead of tearing in, would you do it? I mean for the experience, even if you didn't make much of a showing that way."

I said, "Don't I always fight the way you tell me?"

"Sure you do. But suppose it meant maybe losing this one but learning something?"

"I want to win, of course," I said, "but I'll do anything you tell me. Do you want me to fight him that way?"

"I don't know," he said. "We'll see."

Friday and Saturday I just loafed around. Friday I tried to find somebody to go out and shoot pheasants with but all I could find was Bob Kirby and I was tired of listening to him make the same jokes over and over, so I changed my mind and stayed home.

Loney came home for supper and I asked him what the odds were on our fight.

He said, "Even money. You got a lot of friends."

"Are we betting?" I asked.

"Not yet. Maybe if the price gets better. I don't know."

I wished he had not been so afraid I was going to lose but I thought it might sound kind of conceited if I said anything about it, so I just went on eating.

We had a swell house that Saturday night. The armoury was packed and we got a pretty good hand when we went in the ring. I felt fine and I guess Dick Cohen, who was going to be in my corner with Loney, felt fine too, because he looked like he was trying to keep from grinning. Only Loney looked kind of worried, not enough that you would notice it unless you knew him as well as I did, but I could notice it.

"I'm all right," I told him. A lot of fighters say they feel uncomfortable waiting for their fight to start but I always feel fine.

Loney said, "Sure you are," and slapped me on my back. "Listen, Kid," he said, and cleared his throat. He put his mouth over close to my ear so nobody else would hear him.

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"Listen, Kid, maybe—maybe you better box him like we said. O.K.?"

I said, "O.K."

"And don't let those mugs out front yell you into anything. You're doing the fighting up there."

I said, "O.K."

The first couple of rounds were kind of fun in a way because this was new stuff to me, this moving around him on my toes and going in and out with my hands high. Of course I had done some of that with fellows in the gym but not in the ring before and not with anybody that was as good at it as he was. He was pretty good and had it all over me both of those rounds but nobody hurt anybody else.

But in the first minute of the third he got to my jaw with a honey of a right cross and then whammed me in the body twice fast with his left. Pete and Loney had not been kidding when they said he could hit. I forgot about boxing and went in pumping with both hands, driving him all the way across the ring before he tied me up in a clinch. Everybody yelled so I guess it looked pretty good but I only really hit him once; he took the rest of them on his arms. He was the smartest fighter I had ever been up against.

By the time Pop Agnew broke us I remembered I was supposed to be boxing so I went back to that, but Perelman was going faster and I spent most of the rest of the round trying to keep his left out of my face.

"Hurt you?" Loney asked when I was back in my corner.

"Not yet," I said, "but he can hit."

In the fourth I stopped another right cross with my eye and a lot of lefts with other parts of my face and the fifth round was still tougher. For one thing, the eye he had hit me in was almost shut by that time and for another thing I guess he had me pretty well figured out. He went around and around me, not letting me get set.

"How do you feel?" Loney asked when he and Dick were working on me after that round. His voice was funny, like he had a cold.

I said, "All right." It was hard to talk much because my lips were puffed out.



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"Cover up more," Loney said.

I shook my head up and down to say I would.

"And don't pay any attention to those mugs out front."

I had been too busy with Sailor Perelman to pay much attention to anybody else but when we came out for the sixth round I could hear people hollering things like, "Go in and fight him, Kid," and, "Come on, Kid, go to work on this guy," and, "What are you waiting for, Kid?" so I guessed they had been hollering like that all along. Maybe that had something to do with it or maybe I just wanted to show Loney that I was still all right so he would not worry about me. Anyway, along towards the last part of the round, when Perelman jarred me with another one of those right crosses that I was having so much trouble with, I got down low and went in after him. He hit me some but not enough to keep me away and, even if he did take care of most of my punches, I got in a couple of good ones and I could tell that he felt them. And when he tied me up in a clinch I knew he could do it because he was smarter than me and not because he was stronger.

"What's the matter with you?" he growled in my ear. "Are you gone nuts?" I never liked to talk in the ring so I just grinned to myself without saying anything and kept trying to get a hand loose.

Loney scowled at me when I sat down after that round. "What's the matter with you?" he said. "Didn't I tell you to box him?" He was awful pale and his voice was hoarse.

I said, "All right, I will."

Dick Cohen began to curse over on the side I could not see out of. He did not seem to be cursing anybody or anything, just cursing in a low voice until Loney told him to shut up.

I wanted to ask Loney what I ought to do about that right cross but, with my mouth the way it was, talking was a lot of work and, besides, my nose was stopped up and I had to use my mouth for breathing, so I kept quiet. Loney and Dick worked harder on me than they had between any of the other rounds. When Loney crawled out of the ring just before the gong he slapped me on the shoulder and said in a sharp voice, "Now box."

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I went out and boxed. Perelman must have got to my face thirty times that round; anyway it felt like he did, but I kept on trying to box him. It seemed like a long round.

I went back to my corner not feeling exactly sick but like I might be going to get sick, and that was funny because I could not remember being hit in the stomach to amount to anything. Mostly Perelman had been working on my head. Loney looked a lot sicker than I felt. He looked so sick I tried not to look at him and I felt kind of ashamed of making a bum out of him by letting this Perelman make a monkey out of me like he was doing.

"Can you last it out?" Loney asked.

When I tried to answer him I found that I could not move my lower lip because the inside of it was stuck on a broken tooth. I put a thumb up to it and Loney pushed my glove away and pulled the lip loose from the tooth.

Then I said, "Sure. I'll get the hang of it pretty soon."

Loney made a queer gurgling kind of noise down in his throat and all of a sudden put his face up close in front of mine so that I had to stop looking at the floor and look at him. His eyes were like you think a hophead's are. "Listen, Kid," he says, his voice sounding cruel and hard, almost like he hated me. "To hell with this stuff. Go in and get that mug. What the hell are you boxing for? You're a fighter. Get in there and fight."

I started to say something and then stopped, and I had a goofy idea that I would like to kiss him or something and then he was climbing through the ropes and the gong rang.

I did like Loney said and I guess I took that round by a pretty good edge. It was swell, fighting my own way again, going in banging away with both hands, not swinging or anything silly like that, just shooting them in short and hard, leaning from side to side to get everything from the ankles up into them. He hit me of course but I figured he was not likely to be able to hit me any harder than he had in the other rounds and I had stood up under that, so I was not worrying about it now. Just before the gong rang I threw him out of a clinch and when it rang I had him covering up in a corner.

It was swell back in my corner. Everybody was yelling all around except Loney and Dick and neither of them said a

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single word to me. They hardly looked at me, just at the parts they were working on and they were rougher with me than they ever were before. You would have thought I was a machine they were fixing up. Loney was not looking sick any more. I could tell he was excited because his face was set hard and still. I like to remember him that way, he was awful good looking. Dick was whistling between his teeth very low while he doused my head with a sponge.

I got Perelman sooner than I expected, in the ninth. The first part of the round was his because he came out moving fast and left-handing me and making me look pretty silly, I guess, but he could not keep it up and I got in under one of his lefts and cracked him on the chin with a left hook, the first time I had been able to lay one on his head the way I wanted to. I knew it was a good one even before his head went back and I threw six punches at him as fast as I could get them out—left, right, left, right, left, right. He took care of four of them, but I got him on the chin again with a right and just above his trunks with another, and when his knees bent a little and he tried to clinch I pushed him away and smacked him on the cheek bone with everything I had.

Then Dick Cohen was putting my bathrobe over my shoulders and hugging me and sniffing and cursing and laughing all at the same time, and across the ring they were propping Perelman up on his stool.

"Where's Loney?" I asked.

Dick looked around. "I don't know. He was here. Boy, was that a mill!"

Loney caught up to us just as we were going in the dressing room. "I had to see a fellow," he said. His eyes were bright like he was laughing at something, but he was white as a ghost and he held his lips tight against his teeth even when he grinned kind of lopsided at me and said, "It's going to be a long time before anybody beats you, Kid."

I said I hoped it was. I was awful tired now that it was all over. Usually I get awful hungry after a fight but this time I was just awful tired.

Loney went across to where he had hung his coat and put it on over his sweater, and when he put it on the tail of it

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caught and I saw he had a gun in his hip pocket. That was funny because I never knew him to carry a gun before and if he had had it in the ring everybody would have been sure to see it when he bent over working on me. I could not ask him about it because there were a lot of people in there talking and arguing.

Pretty soon Perelman came in with his manager and two other men who were strangers to me, so I guessed they had come down from Providence with him too. He was looking straight ahead but the others looked kind of hard at Loney and me and went up to the other end of the room without saying anything. We all dressed in one long room there.

Loney said to Dick, who was helping me, "Take your time. I don't want the Kid to go out till he's cooled off."

Perelman got dressed pretty quick and went out still looking straight ahead. His manager and the two men with him stopped in front of us. The manager was a big man with green eyes like a fish and a dark kind of flat face. He said, "Smart boys, huh?"

Loney was standing up with one hand behind him. Dick Cohen put his hands on the back of a chair and kind of leaned over it. Loney said, "I'm smart. The Kid fights the way I tell him to fight."

The manager looked at me and looked at Dick and looked at Loney again and said, "M-m-m, so that's the way it is." He thought a minute and said, "That's something to know." Then he pulled his hat down tighter on his head and turned around and went out with the other two men following.

I asked Loney, "What's the matter?"

He laughed but not like it was anything funny. "Bad losers."

"But you've got a gun in——"

He cut me off. "Uh-huh, a fellow asked me to hold it for him. I got to go give it back to him now. You and Dick go on home and I'll see you there in a little while. But don't hurry, because I want you to cool off before you go out. You two take the car, you know where we parked it. Come here, Dick."

He took Dick over in a corner and whispered to him. Dick kept nodding his head up and down and looking more and

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more scared, even if he did try to hide it when he turned around to me. Loney said, "Be seeing you," and went out.

"What's the matter?" I asked Dick.

He shook his head and said, "It's nothing to worry about," and that was every word I could get out of him.

Five minutes later Bob Kirby's brother Pudge ran in and yelled, "Jees, they shot Loney!"

If I was not so dumb he would still be alive any way you figure it. For a long time I blamed it on Mrs. Schiff, but I guess that was just to keep from admitting that it was my own fault. I mean I never thought she actually did the shooting, like the people who said that when he missed the train that they were supposed to go away on together she came back and waited outside the armoury and when he came out he told her "he had changed his mind and she shot him. I mean I blamed her for lying to him, because it came out that nobody had tipped Big Jake off about her and Loney, Loney had put the idea in her head, telling her about what Pete had said, and she had made up the lie so Loney would go away with her. But if I was not so dumb Loney would have caught that train.

Then a lot of people said Big Jake killed Loney. They said that was why the police never got very far, on account of Big Jake's pull down at the City Hall. It was a fact that he had come home earlier than Mrs. Schiff had expected and she had left a note for him saying that she was running away with Loney, and he could have made it down to the street near the armoury where Loney was shot in time to do it, but he could not have got to the railroad station in time to catch their train, and if I was not so dumb Loney would have caught that train.

And the same way if that Sailor Perelman crowd did it, which is what most people including the police thought even if they did have to let them go because they could not find enough evidence against them. If I was not so dumb Loney could have said to me right out, "Listen, Kid, I've got to go away and I've got to have all the money I can scrape up and the best way to do it is to make a deal with Perelman for you to go in the tank and then bet all we got against you." Why,

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I would have thrown a million fights for Loney, but how could he know he could trust me, with me this dumb?

Or I could have guessed what he wanted and I could have gone down when Perelman copped me with that uppercut in the fifth. That would have been easy. Or if I was not so dumb I would have learned to box better and, even losing to Perelman like I would have anyway, I could have kept him from chopping me to pieces so bad that Loney could not stand it any more and had to throw away everything by telling me to stop boxing and go in and fight.

Or even if everything had happened like it did up to then he could still have ducked out at the last minute if I was not so dumb that he had to stick around to look out for me by telling those Providence guys that I had nothing to do with double-crossing them.

I wish I was dead instead of Loney.

*Dashiell Hammett here poses a problem for which he has given no single solution. True, Mr. Hammett has suggested several theories, without committing himself on any one. But can you detect still another solution? Mr. Hammett has given us the clue in his own title, His Brother's Keeper. Surely it is an equally tenable theory that the "teller" of the tale—young Kid Bolan—shot his brother Loney himself? Motive: jealousy. For isn't it possible, even likely, that the Kid loved Mrs. Schiff, too? What do you think?*

# TO-MORROW'S MURDER<sup>1</sup>

BY

STUART PALMER

HILDEGARDE WITHERS SWINGS THE MALLET IN A POLO  
MYSTERY

*To-morrow's Murder is the only polo-mystery short story we have ever read or heard of. It will probably be your introductory polo-mystery short story, since it is here presented within covers of a book for the first time. . . . It is a mystery in itself that the exciting sport of polo, with its rich opportunities for fictional violence, has not inspired other stories like Mr. Palmer's. Some day—inevitably—there will be a polo murder mystery in which a queer weapon will appear: a polo mallet that conceals a gun. All the homicidal polo player would have to do is aim his mallet at his enemy during the mêlée of ponies and players on the field during play, and shoot. Fantastic? No more so than the lethal cane, the artillery umbrella, or the shotgun crutch—all of which have been used.*

“**T**here is only one reason in the world why my husband would buy a revolver!”

A thin, stony-eyed blonde, wrapped in chinchilla and righteous wrath, made her abrupt exit from the office of Inspector Oscar Piper on this line, punctuating it with a slam of the door which dislodged a framed photograph of the Headquarters' Pistol Team (1922).

The silence surged softly backward into the reception room, and then an angular schoolteacher, complete with cotton umbrella and worn leather handbag, rose to her feet and stepped catlike over the fragments of broken glass.

The Inspector was scribbling a report. “Oh, so it's you!” was the greeting.

“Oscar, what did that woman want?” Miss Hildegard Withers' curiosity was getting the best of her.

<sup>1</sup> Copyright 1940 by Stuart Palmer

## TO-MORROW'S MURDER

He looked up wearily. "Just another hysterical dame who has the idea that her husband plans to bump her off. But I told her that the Homicide Squad has enough to do without worrying over to-morrow's murders. I said she'd better leave town . . ."

"To-morrow's murders!" echoed the schoolteacher thoughtfully. "Coming events cast their shadows . . . please go on, Oscar."

He sighed, and then as usual gave in. "That's about all there is to it. That woman was the former Mavis Dewitt-Brown-Hopkinson. Current husband is Wilfred Parks, polo star. He was what they call a polo bum, selling horses to maintain himself, when she discovered him. Anyway, it seems that he received a small but heavy express package a week ago. Told her it was some new spurs."

"And pray how did she know he lied?"

"I asked that," Piper said. "She told me that a man doesn't usually keep his spurs under his pillow at night, nor wear them in his hip pocket at a dance."

"Any mention of motive for this forthcoming homicide?"

"Not money, anyway," Piper declared. "It seems that Parks doesn't draw more than half of the generous allowance she gives him. I asked if her husband had any reason for being jealous, and she said not to be silly, of course he had. But he wasn't unusually jealous, and even then most of the time he was worried about the wrong person. Even of the family doctor, she said."

"So you see, there's nothing in it. Just a jittery dame with her conscience troubling her. But if she did get bumped off, after asking me for protection, I'd be in a tight spot . . ."

"Oscar, I'm not so sure that anything will happen to that woman," she decided. "But I smell a smoke screen."

He gnawed thoughtfully at a long, green cigar. "You mean that the dame is getting set for a self-defence plea after she kills him?"

Miss Withers shrugged. "Possibly. But perhaps it is the family doctor who should be leaving town!" She picked up her handbag, grasped her umbrella firmly. "I'm off, Oscar. Off on the trail of to-morrow's murder!"



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All was peace and quiet in the Inspector's office until next day when he returned from lunch to find an urgent message asking him to call a Long Island number. In a moment he was listening to a familiar Bostonian accent. He cut in, protested feebly.

"What? Leave my desk and come out to hell-and-gone? It's impossible. Besides, that case is dead. I called the Parks home this morning and the maid says that Mrs. Parks sailed for Bermuda last night."

"Really, Oscar?" Miss Withers' voice was cool and crisp. "And of course you checked to see whether there was a ship sailing for Bermuda last night?" There was a slight pause, and then: "Well, I did. And there wasn't!"

So it was that the Inspector went out to Long Island's depths and was met by Miss Withers at the Norwood station. "Oscar," was her greeting, "you're going to see Wilfred Parks, the famous nine-goal polo star, perform this afternoon at the Shorelands Club."

"And why am I?"

"Because this is a new kind of mystery, Oscar. Usually you have a victim and must search for the killer. Here——" and she led the way towards a waiting taxicab—"here we have a killer and must search for the victim."

As Miss Withers and the Inspector found camp chairs near the end of the line she expressed a hope that it wasn't all over. Her remark caught the attention of a small, wiry person in a worn trench coat, who sat in the chair at her left with his worn riding boots propped on another in front of him. "It's only the end of the second chukker, ma'am," he informed her.

For some years Miss Withers had cultivated the knack of falling into conversation with strangers. She studied for a moment this dry little man, whose small bald spot gave him the monkish effect of a tonsure. "Could you tell me," she began, "just who is the great Mr. Parks? We only came because we wanted to see him in action."

"Parks is number three in the blue jersey," the stranger informed her "See—the big man drinking from the silver thermos."

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Wilfred Parks had a strong but petulant face, undisciplined and uncontrolled, Miss Withers thought. She watched him take a gulp from the thermos, then make a wry face and spit on the grass. He tossed the silver bottle to a blanket, and then strode to where a boyish groom held the reins of a dancing, spotted horse. Parks swung his big loose body up into the saddle and speedily joined the double line of players at the edge of the field. The umpire wheeled his horse and bowled a ball of glistening white willowroot between them.

Then things began to happen with a rapidity which quite bewildered Miss Withers and even the Inspector, who had been half drowsing in the warm sun, snapped to attention. Two mallets swung—a man in red caught the ball and smacked it a few yards down the field. He spurred forward and tried to hit it again, but a man in blue unkindly crashed alongside, putting him out of the play and at the same time sending the ball backward with a wild whirl of his stick.

For a moment the red-jerseyed player hung over the neck of his horse, clutching wildly at the sky. "There he goes," muttered the man who sat beside Miss Withers. He groped for a black kit-bag beside him, and then relaxed as the player miraculously regained his saddle, wheeled his horse, and took off after the ball again.

"Are you the doctor here?" Miss Withers queried.

"I'm Dr. Harris," he admitted. "As a reward for hanging around with my splints they let me go in as a substitute when anything happens to one of the star players, like Parks." The doctor shot her a glance. "You're not friends of his?"

"Of Mrs. Parks," Miss Withers hazarded.

"Parks isn't playing his best game to-day. That man ought to have a complete physical exam," Dr. Harris remarked, half to himself.

Miss Withers nudged the bored Inspector, and said, "Oh, Dr. Harris—then you're the family doctor?"

By this time Dr. Harris had given up resenting her questions.

"I have attended Mavis from measles to wisdom teeth to an appendectomy last March," he said dryly. "As for her latest

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husband, I've seen him through a green-stick fracture of the ulna and two collar-bone smashes."

Just when the Inspector was growing restless a gasp went up from the crowd. Down the field a strange transformation had come over Parks. One wild sweep of his stick had pulled the ball out of the air over his head and sent it forward into a tangle of red and blue players. Under the rider the spotted horse also seemed inspired to super-equine endeavour, for like a maddened centaur the man and beast plunged into the fray and emerged on the farther side, with the ball rolling easily beside them. Parks raised his mallet, pointed his left shoulder . . .

A frantic man in red swung at the ball, but Parks's clubhead came quickest, snapping the ball almost half the length of the field in a long high arc. Eight horses raced after it, eight men dug spur and lashed whip. But there was no stopping this new Parks. Ridden off the ball by the desperate Reds, blocked and bumped and hemmed in, he still somehow managed to reach that scarred white globule and snap it between the goal posts in a seemingly impossible tail shot.

The players speedily lined up for another throw-in, and again there was a wild scurry of confusion as every man swung at it and every man missed. It was a pony's hoof which finally knocked the ball into the clear, and then the crowd stirred as they saw a big "3" on the blue jersey that flashed after it.

Parks rose high in his irons, reins slack on the withers of the spotted horse and his left shoulder twisted down at the ball. The heavy face under his white-cork helmet was contorted with supreme effort and then, just as the pony's flashing fore legs came up to the ball, the rider snapped the stick back, down, and forward in a terrific forehand drive.

There was the sharp musical snap of a truly hit ball, and the willowroot rose and floated bright and fair down the field.

The eyes of the crowd turned after it, and the other seven men raced after it. So that, as it happened, Miss Hildegard Withers and one other person were the only ones watching the man in the blue jersey as he slumped in the saddle, rolled sideways, and then plunged headlong to the turf.

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The spotted horse, stumbling a little, trotted to the sideboards and fell to nibbling grass. Wilfred Parks lay motionless. Miss Withers knew suddenly that he would never rise again. "Oscar, this is what we came to see," said the schoolteacher grimly.

"The doctor says it's concussion," Inspector Oscar Piper announced importantly as he approached the spot near the sideboards where Miss Withers had been waiting. But she nodded absently and went on patting the nose of the spotted pony, who stared apathetically past her at the white-lipped, boyish groom who held his rein.

"This is Tad Alferts—Mr. Piper," she introduced them. "Tad is—or was—Mr. Parks's groom."

The boy seemed hurt at that. "I'm just working as a groom until something better comes along," he hastened to explain. "I was studying to be a veterinary surgeon, but I had to give it up temporarily."

Miss Withers was looking down at the bright blanket where were spread out all the dead man's polo mallets. "By the way," she said softly, "just where is Mr. Parks's silver thermos? Or did that have an accident, too?"

The young groom didn't know. But people were always switching stuff around here. His voice trailed away again as he saw that both Miss Withers and the Inspector were staring at the gold combination cigarette case and lighter in his hand.

Alferts smiled. "He—Mr. Parks, I mean—gave me this for Christmas. He'd give you the shirt off his back."

The Inspector was growing impatient. "One question more," Miss Withers put in. "Where could we reach you in case something comes up?"

Tad Alferts hesitated. "Well—I generally sleep on a cot here at the stables . . ."

"You're not married, then?"

He blushed. "Well—I'm thinking about it."

Miss Withers beamed at him. Red about the neck and ears, Alferts led the spotted pony towards the stables, jerking nervously as the horse stumbled and almost fell when they crossed the low sideboards.

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They walked slowly past the line of empty chairs towards the main gate where they found a taxi and joined the procession of cars which rolled slowly along the asphalt drive towards town.

It was, in the main, a tranquil journey, except for the moment when a shrill siren sounded behind them. A rather sporty open roadster cut past, on the wrong side of the road, and there was the red sign *PHYSICIAN* above the rear licence plate.

"Harris! Wonder where he's off to in such a hurry?" said the Inspector.

Miss Withers refused to speculate. But she leaned forward and tapped sharply on the glass. "Instead of the railroad station, you may drive us to the County Sheriff's office," she commanded.

The Inspector frowned. "Now Hildegarde, you know I can't go butting in on a thing like this, without a leg to stand on except your hunches. . . ."

"You should be more observant, Oscar," she told him. "The Sheriff will listen to us. Because I happened to notice that Dr. Harris had a silver thermos bottle beside him on the seat!"

When the Inspector, with some help from Miss Withers, had laid most of their cards on the table, Sheriff Oakes nodded. Then he reached for his telephone, dialled a number and said: "Is Doctor there? Yeah . . . hello, Paul. Can you come over to my office right away? Uh-huh. Right away."

Dr. Harris, somewhat annoyed, arrived and was ushered in. "These folks," said the Sheriff quietly, "just come in with quite a story worked out. They're sorta accusing you of the theft of a silver thermos bottle."

The doctor's smile hardened. He sat down, lighted a cigarette. "Why, yes," he said. "Naturally."

"Naturally?" cut in the Inspector. "Then you, too——"

Dr. Harris nodded. "It's a long story—but you see, Parks had an idea that once, in the East-West tournament last month, somebody tried to drug that water bottle . . . with the

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idea of slowing up his game. So to-day—well, I thought the bottle ought to be analyzed.”

The others all leaned forward, hanging on his words. “And what was in the thermos?” demanded Miss Withers.

“Hydrogen dioxide,” Dr. Harris informed her. “H<sub>2</sub>O.”

“You mean—just plain water?” Piper cut in incredulously.

Harris nodded. “Nothing there to hurt him unless he drowned in it.”

It was at this point that the Sheriff suddenly stood up, the smile on his fat face a very set one now. “You folks satisfied now?”

“We had no business to go barging in,” Piper told her as they left the office. “We’ve got to go back where we belong, and stop stepping on the Sheriff’s toes . . .”

“You’re going, not I,” Miss Withers snapped. “Murder is every citizen’s business. Good afternoon!” And so she turned and left him.

The Inspector had barely reached his home on Manhattan when the telephone shrieked its summons, and the familiar voice of Hildegarde Withers greeted him.

“You may be interested to know that just after we left the office of Sheriff Oakes, he ordered an autopsy performed on the body of Wilfred Parks.”

“Yeah? Just taking precautions, that’s all. . . .”

“No, Oscar. Do you know who’s performing that autopsy at this very moment? It’s Dr. Harris!”

There was silence at the Inspector’s end of the line. Then—“O.K., Hildegarde. I’ll go over to the Parks apartment and see what I can find out. You stick around the Sheriff’s office and let me know how the autopsy comes out.”

Questioned by Inspector Oscar Piper was Eve Simpson, parlourmaid in the Parks home, who stated that as God was her judge she had packed Mrs. Parks’s clothes for a trip to Bermuda, including Mothersills for *mal de mer*. No, she didn’t think that Mrs. Parks had ever given her husband any reason to be jealous. Of course the doctor did come rather often, but Mrs. Parks had been very delicate since her operation.

Somewhat conflicting was the testimony of Mrs. Mabel

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Rogers, cook-housekeeper in the Parks home, who swore on her sacred oath that if anything had happened to the poor young master it was the work of that green-eyed lath of a woman, Mavis. Pressed for more damning details, Mrs. Rogers said that once, a few months before, Mrs. Parks had gone to a party aboard Mr. Tom Van Orpet's yacht, and hadn't come home until 8 a.m.

Charles Togo, butler to Mr. Tom Van Orpet, when reached by telephone at the Van Orpet penthouse on Sutton Place, gave vague information as to the fact that Mr. Van Orpet was cruising somewhere on Long Island Sound in the *Penguin III*.

"There it is," said the Inspector when Miss Withers called him back much later that same evening. "Just servants' gossip, but if it does you any good——" He cut short her thanks. "Has the doctor turned in his verdict of accidental death yet?"

Miss Withers hesitated. Then "Yes, and no. Yes, he turned it in, and no, it wasn't accidental death!"

The Inspector whistled. "What?"

"Dr. Harris discovered that Wilfred Parks was poisoned."

"What kind of poison?"

"Oil of something—mirbane I think it was. There are limits to what even I can hear through the closed door of the Sheriff's inner office, Oscar."

He could understand that. "Nice going, Hildegard. Well, that clears the doctor, anyway."

"Oscar, you're really improving!" Miss Withers told him. "If you'll come down here again I'll let you help me interview the one witness that we've neglected."

"Huh? Oh, you mean the good-looking groom with the fancy cigarette case?"

Miss Withers didn't mean Alferts at all. "I was referring to the spotted horse," she told the Inspector. "In my opinion that horse is more likely to——"

Here the Inspector exploded. "Phooey," he told her, which she correctly interpreted to mean that he was not interested in interviewing horses, that he was sick and tired of the Parks murder, and that he was going to bed and would not further answer his telephone.

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So Hildegard Withers started out alone. Whatever may have been her intentions in regard to interviewing the spotted horse, it was to Dr. Harris that she went first. The crisp little medico had not, as she had half feared, started for Bermuda or other distant points. He was at home, a spacious and rambling abode in one of the better streets of the little city. He admitted her genially, wearing a purple-silk dressing gown.

"You didn't disturb me a bit," he said. "I was just boning up on poisons a bit before making out my official report." And he led the way to his study.

He took down a fat volume. "Here it is in Peterson, Haines and Webster," he said. "'Nitrobenzine, known as essence or oil of mirbane, a pale-yellow, oily liquid, used commercially in the manufacture of explosives, in making aniline dyes, soaps, perfumes, and patent medicines. Symptoms . . . first a stimulation of body and mind, followed in a few minutes by numbness, dizziness and disturbance of vision. Later Cheyne-Stokes respiration going directly into coma and death. The face becomes greyish blue, the nails and lips purple. Death within an hour, particularly swift when the poison is absorbed through the skin or nasal passages rather than swallowed . . .'"

Miss Withers gulped. "That's enough," she begged off. "There is no doubt that Parks died of this?"

Dr. Harris shook his head.

"Could it have been from something he ate or drank?"

Dr. Harris shrugged. "Might have been in his lunch."

"I wonder," said Miss Withers casually, "if the spotted horse had lunch with its master to-day?"

The doctor frowned, almost dropped the book, and then said hopefully, "Now if that's all the questions, ma'am, I'd like to get on with my report."

Miss Withers rose to go. "Just one more question, Doctor. Do you always carry a gun in the pocket of your dressing gown?"

He did not even bat an eye. Slowly he pulled a small automatic from his pocket and pointed it at her, butt first. "I just wanted to examine this more carefully," he told her. "You see, I found this gun in the pocket of Parks's riding breeches!"



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It was brand new, fully loaded and had never been fired. So Mavis Parks had been telling the truth, after all. Or else . . .

By the time a taxicab had deposited her at the gate of Shorelands, Miss Withers was heartily wishing that she had borrowed the little automatic from Dr. Harris.

"To-morrow would do just as well," she told herself. Then she shook her head and started valiantly towards the stables. Suddenly she noticed that there was a light in the stables.

It was a faint light, which seemed to pulsate, to swing and glow and die away . . . and come again. It was a furtive light, sneaky . . .

"Flashlight," hazarded the schoolteacher.

She went on, tiptoeing softly over cobblestones. Once, as she was poised in the shadows alongside the stables, a long, sad visage appeared out of nowhere and went *whoosh* almost in her face, then swiftly withdrew inside its stall again. Miss Withers gulped, and backed hastily away. Backed, as it happened, into something very hard that pressed against her spine.

"Reach!" said a determined voice. And she reached. A flashlight blinded her, and then her captor said: "Oh, so it's only you!" Mr. Tad Alferts had, it developed, held her up with the end of his flashlight in lieu of a pistol.

"What are you doing here at this hour?" she accused him. It was part of Miss Withers' philosophy to attack first.

Alferts said why wouldn't he be up, with a sick horse on his hands? And he showed her the stall where lay the spotted horse that Parks had ridden that afternoon. The beast lay on its side, eyes glazed, breathing thickly.

"Another mystery, eh?" the schoolteacher said. "I thought I was near the solution of all our mysteries a few moments ago when I saw your flashlight over there." And she pointed.

Tad Alferts stiffened. "But you didn't," he said. "I mean—I wasn't. That's the tack rooms over there—where we keep saddles and bridles and so forth."

He turned and ran, Miss Withers following him as best she could. They came to the tack room, and Alferts switched on the light. There were rows of saddles, neatly hanging on pegs. There were bridles and halters, sheets and blankets neatly

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monogrammed, bandages and polo mallets and bottles. But there was no marauder here. There was no sign of any marauder—except for one empty peg in the row of saddles.

Alfers turned to face Miss Withers. "I guess you're barking up the wrong tree," he told her. "I guess maybe you better get back to minding your business, ma'am, and I'll get back to tending my sick horse."

He left her very swiftly. So swiftly, indeed, that it was not for several moments that Miss Withers realized the fact that in his haste he had disappeared in the opposite direction to the stable in which the spotted horse had been. Back to the town she went, still wondering.

"One ticket to Penn Station," she said wearily to the clerk. And then there was a brusque voice behind her.

"No you don't, Hildegard," said the Inspector, grinning. "I don't wonder you're surprised to see me. But I thought you ought to know. We've found Mavis Parks."

"Where was she, on Van Orpet's yacht?" demanded Miss Withers.

The Inspector winced. "You knew? Well, maybe you didn't know that she tried to commit suicide to-night by jumping overboard, and that she is being rushed to shore by the Coast Guard!"

Piper's smile of triumph was somewhat cut short by the abrupt departure of his audience. "Come on, Oscar!" was her only explanation as he caught up with her in the station exit.

"Come on where?" he quite naturally demanded. But Miss Withers was already giving directions to a taxi driver.

"Fourteen two Pinewood—the residence of Dr. Harris!" she commanded. "And step on it."

The driver stepped. "Now, Hildegard," complained the Inspector as they approached the doctor's house, "I don't see——"

"You don't see the meaning of the thermos bottle and the cigarette case and the stumbling horse and the jittery wife? Neither did I, Oscar, neither did I. Until just now."

Miss Withers led the way up the walk, but instead of ringing the front bell she impelled the Inspector on through

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the garden, on to the window from which the doctor had spied upon her only a short time before. Piper stood beside her and peered in through the window.

The room was dark except for a shaded lamp at the desk, where appeared to be a very sharp knife. Dr. Harris moved to one side, and the two Peeping Toms saw that what he was slicing was nothing less than the leather cantle of a saddle . . . slicing off thin strips.

Somebody else was watching the doctor, watching from an inner doorway of the room. They could only mark a shadowy outline, a waiting, formless figure . . .

"We seem for once to have arrived at the crucial moment," Miss Withers whispered. "Oscar, have you got a gun?"

He nodded. Inside the room Dr. Harris pushed aside the wrecked saddle, dropped slices of the leather into a glass retort. He referred again to a thick tome, started to rise—

Just at that moment the shadowy figure in the room's inner doorway rushed forward, seizing the doctor from behind. The retort with its strange contents crashed to the floor, and both men fell against the desk, knocking the shade from the light.

It was Tad Alfers, a white-faced avenging Tad Alfers, who wrestled so fiercely and so silently with the doctor. Harris twisted, struck out blindly, but he was no match for the younger man.

The Inspector was trying to raise the window. "Never mind that," cried Miss Withers. "Use your gun, Oscar. Shoot!"

"No need for that," he grunted. "Young Alfers is doing all right. Let him nab our man for us . . ."

Then the amazed Inspector felt Miss Withers seize his gun hand, squeeze it . . .

A shot smashed wildly through the glass, the slug burying itself harmlessly in the ceiling. But Alfers let go his grasp of the doctor's throat, turned towards the window for a moment in blank amazement.

The moment was long enough for Dr. Harris, who picked up Peterson, Haines and Webster and with that massive tome struck Alfers on the back of the neck. Tad Alfers took two steps forward, and then his arms slackened and he went down on his face.

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"Meet the murderer of Wilfred Parks," said Miss Withers sweetly.

"Oil of mirbane, well soaked into the saddle," was the verdict of Dr. Harris. He showed Miss Withers a retort filled with scraps of leather and a cloudy liquid which had a ring of bright carmine, already turning green. "Morpurgo's test," he confided.

The Inspector was finishing a neat set of knots upon the person of Tad Alferts. "You see, Oscar," Miss Withers said, "the polo pony showed some of the symptoms of the poisoning, too—including the temporary blindness which made it fall over the sideboards. So it must have been the saddle . . ."

The Inspector gave his prisoner a last shove and stood up. "I get that," he confessed. "I thought all along it must have been the water bottle, but I was wrong."

"You were right, Oscar," Miss Withers corrected. "Alfers did try poison in the water bottle, but his employer detected it. He even complained that someone was trying to dope him, and bought a gun for protection. So Alferts had to try a more subtle way. He admitted studying to be a veterinary, and must have known quite a bit about poisons . . ." She looked down at the prisoner. "Isn't that true, Mr. Alferts?"

The boy stared up at them, his dull smoky eyes filled with hate. But he did not speak.

"Where does Mrs. Parks come into all this?" Piper demanded. "Bursting into my office, and then leaving town, and finally trying to kill herself . . ."

"*Cherchez la femme*, Oscar," the schoolteacher told him. "You heard Mr. Alferts here tell me that he was thinking of getting married. That—and the gold cigarette case—should have told us. A man gives a gold cigarette case to an employee who has only worked for him a few months? Fiddlesticks, Oscar. But a woman might—a silly woman with more money than sense, and a liking for handsome young men," Miss Withers sniffed. "Mavis Parks has been married and divorced four or five times."

Dr. Harris interrupted. "But Mavis had no idea of divorcing Willy Parks—and the glamour of his polo rating——"

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"Of course not," Miss Withers agreed. "Which was why the ambitious Mr. Alferts here thought that it would be wise to remove Parks. And then why shouldn't he marry her—and her millions? Am I right, Mr. Alferts?"

The man on the floor started talking then, and kept on until he was safe in the Bayside County Jail, a prisoner of the pleased but bewildered Sheriff Oakes. "You folks seem to have turned everything upside down, and committed a couple of misdemeanours and maybe a felony in shooting off that there gun, but I guess I got to let you get away with it," he decided.

"It was a Mr. Emerson," Miss Withers told him, "who said 'In skating over thin ice our safety is our speed'!"

# THE BOAT RACE MURDER

BY

DAVID WINSER

A BOAT RACE MYSTERY

*While many crimes in short stories have been committed and solved on watercraft, Mr. Winsor's is the only one we know of that involves boating as a true sport. . . . Agatha Christie's The Regatta Mystery (from The Regatta Mystery and Other Stories) has a promising title—but unfortunately investigation proves that Miss Christie's regatta serves merely as an incidental background for her story.*

For the three weeks before the Boat Race the Oxford crew generally lives at Ranelagh. This costs quite a penny, though it is conveniently close to the boat-houses, but the question of money doesn't much worry the rowing authorities. The reason for this is that rowing, like every other Oxford sport, is more or less entirely supported by the gate receipts of the Rugger club. So there we lived, in Edwardian comfort, and played croquet on the immaculate croquet lawns in the special croquet goloshes they give you and admired the birds and the ruins. They also fed us remarkably well considering we were in training.

All kinds of things occurred. There was one peacock, an amorous bird, which had a crush on the president, who rowed two. It used to come and display its tail in front of him and wait for him to submit. He never did, though.

But at Ranelagh, in spite of the way they'd sometimes put our names in the papers, we led a completely reporterless life, if that's the word I want. We didn't like the sort of stories that got told about rowing, such as the one which held that the crew that won after Barnes all died in the next five years (they're actually mostly alive still). So what with the O.U.B.C. and Ranelagh, and the fact that all the rowing reporters were

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friends of ours and of rowing, you didn't hear much. But, now, I think this story needs telling. In fact I more or less have to tell it.

You must try and picture a fizz night at Ranelagh. Someone, the coach or some other old Blue, has suddenly produced a dozen bottles of champagne and the coach has said that the crew's been going so well that it damn well deserves the filthy stuff. Actually, as he and everyone else knows, the main purpose of fizz is to stop the crew getting stale. But the tradition's always the same: it's supposed to be a reward for hard work. On this particular night the coach and an old Blue between them had produced *two* dozen bottles, because the second crew, the *Isis*, was coming over to dinner from Richmond.

Perhaps you can imagine the rest already. Solly Johnstone leaning back in his chair and laughing so hard at his own jokes that everyone else is laughing. Once I saw the president try to stop him making jokes because it was hurting him terribly to go on laughing so hard, but Solly didn't stop. And then, after dinner, two crews milling about in the big games room, the president taking cine-camera pictures with an enormous searchlight affair, the *Isis* crew taking on the varsity at billiards and ping-pong, Ronnie playing the piano and someone singing, the gramophone playing "The Donkey Serenade," Solly still making his incredible jokes, and somewhere over in the corner Melvin Green talking about rowing to Dr. Jeffreys, who coached the crew for the first part of training. The noise, and the general tohu-bohu, as Solly said, were both considerable.

I was watching this with a benevolent and yet slightly mildewed eye, because I had a feeling that I didn't deserve to be quite as cheerful as the rest of them. I was the cox, and furthermore I had had some very bad news. And again, when people like Jon Peters and Harry Whitteredge were slightly out of control, their fourteen stone made walking dangerous for coxes. No one who saw them that night would have credited them with the dignity, the dignity which only their genius stopped short of ponderousness, with which they sent that boat along in the race. They looked about as dignified as a bull on skates. But I happened to know that they were going to get as

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bad a shock as I had, nearly as bad a shock as Jim Matthews. Jim Matthews was the stroke, and he was going to find himself out of the crew.

Now this may not sound especially serious. Jim Matthews never had the reputation of Brocklebank, or Lawrie, or Sutcliffe, or Bryan Hodgson. You didn't read in the papers that he was going to pull off the race all by himself. And in a way he wasn't. But I heard a conversation once between Jon and Harry, who were wonderful oarsmen in their day, and it was rather significant.

"That fellow Matthews," Jon said, or words to this effect, "doesn't look much, and he doesn't do much, and doesn't talk much. Also I don't like him particularly. But I'm damned if there's anyone else who gives me time to come forward."

"The trouble with us, Jon," Harry said, "is that we need such a hell of a lot of time."

"Yes, but Jim gives it to us. If we have Jim we'll win this race."

"Don't you think we will anyway?"

"Not without Jim."

"I know. Nor do I."

I don't suppose it matters much to you who wins the Boat Race. But, for the purposes of this story, to get the record straight, you have to realize that ten or eleven men think of practically nothing else, for twelve whole weeks of training, than getting into the crew and seeing Oxford win. It becomes an obsession, a continual idea at the back of one's mind. Jon had a baby car, and once, when the crew was travelling by car from Oxford to Henley, Jon and Harry took an omen. If they could pass and *touch with their hands* every other O.U.B.C. car, Oxford would win the Boat Race. So, at considerable risk to their lives (and Oxford wouldn't have won without them), they touched every car. It was that sort of thing every day. And now the coaches were going to drop Jim Matthews, and those two wouldn't have time to come forward. When that happened all their dignity and poise over the stretcher went with the wind and they became more of a hindrance than a help, charging backwards and forwards in the boat. So, not



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for you or Oxford perhaps, but for those men who rowed in the crew, Jim's going was a real tragedy. Everyone knew that once they'd put in Davis, the dark-haired short-built *Isis* stroke, they'd leave him there. And David, who had plenty of guts and rowed as hard as he could, was hopelessly short in the water. There'd be hell to pay.

As for Jim, I knew a bit how he felt. I'd been in and out of the crew myself, because the *Isis* cox was at least as good as I was and knew the river even better. I wouldn't have been a bit surprised at anything Jim had done. But, as soon as the coaches told him, he'd frozen up completely. He hadn't said anything to them, which was stupid of him. They hadn't wanted to make the change; his own carelessness, which we knew was designed to save himself for one of those terrific races he'd row, looked sloppy. The coaches were worried, and the rowing correspondents started saying Oxford was stale. Hence the fizz, and hence Davis.

And all Jim said, in front of the coaches, he said to me. "Come on, Peter," he said. "I'm going to scare the Alacrity bird."

So Jon and I took him back to Ranelagh in my small M.G. and dropped him near the Alacrity bird's usual haunt; the bird was a crane which flew when you chased it. Then I let Jon drive the car into its garage. He wasn't allowed his car or his pipe during the last six weeks of training, and he needed a few luxuries like that. He joined me again before I reached the main house and we walked in together.

"Your petrol's low," he said. He didn't know about Jim yet but he sounded depressed, as if he knew something of the sort was afoot.

"There's enough for to-morrow, isn't there?"

"Provided the gauge is right, you've got half a gallon."

"That's all right then. Don't worry about the outing, Jon. Fizz night to-night."

Somewhere outside in the garden poor Jim Matthews was walking. I think the Alacrity bird was only an excuse because he wanted to be by himself. I was sorry for Jim. He'd have one more outing, with Davis rowing two, and then he'd go.

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Next day, as might be expected after a fizz night, everything went wrong. To begin with I left it too late to get down to the river in time, thinking I'd take my car. I was the only one of the crew allowed to go into shops, because the others were thought to be especially susceptible to flu at that stage of training, so I used to take my car with me and go out shopping after the outing. But that morning I found there wasn't any petrol after all, so I had to run all the way across the polo grounds. They were just getting the boat out when I came, with a little boy doing my work. I pushed him aside without saying thanks, and behaved in a thoroughly bad manner. And then Davis, who was pardonably nervous, paddled on hard when I told him to touch her gently and the boat just missed drifting on to a buoy. Jim Matthews, like everyone else, sat there doing nothing, while I swore. The only incident of interest was that Jon and Harry swore back, being apparently by now aware that Davis was coming up to stroke. Davis rowed too fast. They got tired, and the coaches would accuse them of bucketing, and the boat would start stopping. I didn't blame them for swearing. I swore too.

The coach picked up his megaphone. "Ready, cox?" he asked. He didn't ask it out of kindness.

I said Yes.

"Paddle on down to the Eyot," he said. "Jim, make them work it up a bit once or twice."

Now the Eyot is a good fifteen minutes' paddle from the boat houses, and Jim, I suppose because it was his last time as stroke, took them along really hard. When he worked it up he worked it right up, nearly to forty, and he kept it there for a full minute. Then, not so long afterwards, he did it again. And to end up with he put in a terrific burst of rowing. All the time he was steady, swinging them easily along. I could see the great green holes in the water Jon and Harry made. The boat travelled. I wondered whether the coaches were going to change their mind. No one will know that now, not even Jim. I'd noticed Davis' blade wasn't coming through very well at the end of the paddle, but I hadn't thought anything else about it. When we'd eased he leant forward over his oar and stayed

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there, but again this wasn't very unusual; it had been about as hard work as a paddle like that can be. After a rest I gave the order to come half forward, because we were going to do a rowing start. But Davis didn't move.

"Half forward, two!" I said, still angrily.

Then apparently bow leant forward and touched him, because his body slumped forward, slid over the gunnel, and went into the water. I don't know when he died, but he was dead when the launch reached him. Luckily Dr. Jeffreys was on the spot, waiting to see what difference the change would make. Well, he'd seen.

If I'd ever doubted whether the coaches deserved their positions, and during training you doubt most things, I was all wrong. They took the launch on up to the London University boat-house, where no one ever went during the mornings, got Solly's car round there, put Davis' body in it, brought it to Ranelagh without either the crew or the press or the secretary of Ranelagh seeing, and before lunch they'd got the whole crew together, and Dr. Joe Jeffreys was talking to them. One of the chief duties of the coaches was to keep the crew feeling happy.

"Well," said Joe, "you all saw what happened. Poor young Davis died of heart failure. I know how you feel, and you know how I feel. But there's one thing you ought to understand clearly. The reason he died was that his heart was dicky before he started. I never tested it, but I know it was, because your heart doesn't fail at the end of a paddle unless it *is* dicky. And I know all your hearts are damn sound, because I *did* test them. Just to make sure I'm going to test them again to-day."

And he did, and he was quite right; there was nothing wrong with any of the toughs.

But in the middle, when Jon had just gone out and Solly, Joe and I were alone in the room, Joe suddenly stopped.

"I *did* test Davis' heart," he said.

Well, Solly made a rather typical crack about the value of tests, but apparently this was a pretty sound test. Anyway we went and rang up the police.

"That kid was murdered," said Joe. I suppose Solly thought

## THE BOAT RACE MURDER

he was just humouring him. Another of the duties of coaches is to keep the other coaches feeling happy. Those last weeks of training are the devil all round.

It was rather typical of the way the Boat Race gets a grip on people that the crew went out that afternoon. Solly insisted he was only doing it to allay any suspicion about Davis in the minds of the press. But anyway the boat went out, and, with Jim stroking beautifully, they rowed the best two minutes they'd ever done, clearing their wash by yards at thirty-six. When Jim was there, that was as good a crew as any.

The police were around when we got back, but that didn't bother us much. You see, we all knew each other pretty well; you don't have murderers rowing with you. Murderers are professionals, probably, as they've worked with their hands. Anyway, you don't.

Well, they found out what had killed Davis. We'll call it diphenyl tyrosine; Jim and I knew what its real name was because we happened to be medical students. Joe Jeffreys knew it too, of course. The odd thing about it is that it's a component of quite a common patent medicine. That's all right, because it only quickens up your heart for a day or so; but when you start with a quickened heart and then row hard in a Boat Race crew your heart gets very quick indeed, so quick that it doesn't really function adequately. It starts to jump about a bit, and then it starts to fibrillate, to quiver all over in rather a useless way. Then, if it's the ventricle fibrillating, you die. Davis had plenty of guts; he went on just as long as his heart did. He had the guts of a good stroke, but he wasn't Jim Matthews. I was sorry for Davis, but, for the crew's sake, I was glad Jim was safe. The funny thing was that whoever killed Davis must have known that he'd got guts.

Now they started in on a long investigation of the crew's movements during the day before. It had to be the day before because they'd got a very interesting bit of evidence. A man had come into a chemist's in Putney and he'd asked for this patent medicine, as no doubt men did every day. He'd worn a mackintosh and an old hat.

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But underneath the mackintosh the chemist had noticed he was wearing those queer white blanket trousers the crews wear out of the boat.

The policeman who was doing the detective work then had two very frustrating conversations which he described to us with fair relish.

He'd asked the chemist if the purchaser in the white trousers had been a big man. The chemist said, Yes.

"Bigger than me?"

"Well, maybe."

"Sure he wasn't fairly small?"

The chemist considered. "Well," he said, "you might call him small."

"Could you draw a line against the wall showing just his height?"

The chemist stepped forward confidently, stopped, tried to think, and then said:

"No. Not exactly, somehow."

"What colour was his hair then?"

"Oh," said the chemist, "if I noticed the colour of all my customers' hair I'd be in a pretty state." He became a little irritable. "All I know is," he said, "he had white trousers on."

The other conversation was the sequel to the discovery that Jon and I brought my car back when the rest of the crew came in. They wanted to find if anyone went *out* of Ranelagh in a car like mine.

The detective people went to the porters at the two gates. "Did you see a small black sports car go out of the grounds?" they asked. "After 5.30."

Those were the days when Hornets and M.G.'s were as common as sneezing. One porter said he'd seen four, colour unnoticed; the other had seen seven, three of them black or dark-brown.

"Well," said the fellows, "did you see any coming back again?"

"Those seven," said the porter, who wasn't colour-blind, "was going both ways." He wasn't shaken from this peculiar belief. In short they didn't get any change out of porters or

## THE BOAT RACE MURDER

chemists. Someone in the crew *did* buy this patent medicine and someone *could* have gone out in my car. They never found the bottle, of course. There were hundreds of ways to get rid of it—you might put it down the lavatory and pull the plug, for instance. It was one of those small bottles. You'll be guessing its name in a minute but, luckily, you'll guess wrong.

Then, also in front of me, someone realized that if the chemist had been at all an efficient man he'd have made the fellow in the mackintosh sign for the medicine, simply because, technically, it was poison if you had a whole bottleful. So one of them went off to find out if the chemist was as efficient as all that, and the other started to find out where we'd all been.

Now the curious thing about all this investigation was that it had taken a very short time. It was still only the day after the murder. As soon as they knew it was murder they'd started thinking about heart drugs, the sort you might mix up in someone's milk as they went to bed, or drop in a glass of fizz; so they thought of diphenyl tyrosine and, sure enough, there it was when they did an autopsy on Davis. No one knew when he'd taken it; but they'd decided it must have been in his fizz. Personally the mechanism of this seems pretty difficult to me, but that's what they said. I suppose they'd had experience of that sort of thing. Anyway he'd certainly not have been looking out for it; very few people expect to be poisoned in the middle of a fizz night. They seemed so certain about it all, quite rightly as it turned out, that we didn't like to doubt their word. So we were all terribly efficient when it came to describing our movements.

They only wanted to know about the time between 5.30, when we all came back from the outing, and six. The chemist said the purchaser in the white trousers had come in at about 5.45, and the reason he knew was that it was a quarter of an hour before he closed at six, and the fact that no other customers had come in afterwards had made him think he'd been a sap not to close quarter of an hour earlier. This looked pretty good evidence to me, and the detective fellows liked it a lot.

Most of the crew had been together from 5.30 till six, all in the big games room. Jon, Jim and I hadn't been there at first.

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We knew where Jim was, outside with the Alacrity bird. The three of us got back from the outing a little later than the rest of them because of that talk with the coaches, and Jim had come into the house again at ten to six. We were sure of that, or very nearly sure, because by six o'clock, when the news came on, he'd played a complete game of ping-pong with Ronnie. That left quarter of an hour of Jim unaccounted for.

Jon said he'd been in his room all the time till six, when he came down for the news.

I said I hadn't been in the games room at all. First of all I'd done the crossword and then I'd been signing autographs for the crew.

"How do you mean 'for the crew'?" one of them asked.

I told him that the rest of them could never be bothered to sign autograph books. All the coxes after Peter Bryan's time had had to forge the signatures of everyone else; it was one of their duties. So long as you had two or three different nibs and patience you could make a very good job of it indeed.

"Oh," they said, laughing. "That's dangerous."

I said not so dangerous as they thought.

Well, one of the detectives walked to the chemist's and back. It took twenty-five minutes, walking hard. That meant that Jon or I could have gone on our feet or by car, while Jim could only have gone by car. On his way there he met the detective who'd been to see if anyone signed. Someone had, all right, but it was probably not his name. *A. G. Callimage*, someone had written.

They went to work on this clue, rather ingeniously. The detective said he wanted a genuine autograph, and went round to each member of the crew with some sentimental story about his daughter being ill in bed and only needing a genuine autograph to recover. It's wonderful what rowing men will swallow. Jim was the only one who made a fuss. He was playing ping-pong again and he said, as rudely as usual:

"The cox can forge mine."

The detective said he knew that. His daughter wanted a real one. After that Jim signed, a bit grudgingly; and went on playing.

## THE BOAT RACE MURDER

He signed in a writing very like Gallimage's.

This more or less meant Jim or me. I forgot to say that they checked up on Jon and found that a maid had seen him in his room between 5.40 and 5.50. She didn't say so, but I expect he went up there for a smoke. He thought it improved *his* rowing but nobody else's. So Jim and I were left, and the signature did very well for either of us. It was typical of the effect of the Boat Race atmosphere that the detectives came and asked Solly if they could arrest both of us. I know they did because I was in the room at the time.

"Would you mind if we arrested Matthews and your cox?" they asked.

"Yes, old chap," said Solly. "We can get another cox, but we haven't any more strokes. Leave them both if you can."

The detective looked serious. "Evidence is bad," he said.

Solly leant back in his chair. "Trot it out," he said. "The cox and I will spoil it. The cox does the crossword in half an hour every morning."

"Twenty-five minutes with Jon," I said. "That was two days ago."

Then I shut up.

The detective trotted out the evidence. At the end I pointed out a flaw. It wasn't half as hard as *The Times* crossword, let alone Torquemada.

"But if Jim went," I said, "he must have used the car."

"Yes."

"But there wasn't any petrol in the car."

"Sure?"

"Quite sure. You see Jon and I both saw the gauge reading half a gallon. Only next morning it still read half a gallon and there wasn't any petrol in her. It foxed me completely."

"It certainly did," said Solly.

"You realize what you're saying?" asked the detective.

"No," I said.

"If Jim Matthews didn't take your car, then someone walked to the shop. That means you walked, because Jim didn't have time."

"He could have run," I said.



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"Ah," said the detective. "That's where you're wrong. *He wasn't out of breath.*"

I suppose I looked pretty shaken by this bit of information, because Solly patted me on the back in a very kindly way. "That's all right," he said. "It'll turn out not to have been either of you. Glad you remembered about the petrol."

I was a good deal comforted by this. "Well," I said, "that fellow who coxes the *Isis* is a damn fine cox, and I've got one Blue already. I know we'll win. But I wish they had wireless sets in prison."

"We'll try and let you know all about it," said the detective. This seemed to me a pretty decent way to speak to a murderer.

That isn't all, and it won't be all either. Oxford won, of course, with one of Jim's beautifully timed spurts. He couldn't have made it without Harry and Jon and they couldn't have made it if he hadn't been there, swinging them along so steadily and easily that you'd have thought they were paddling. That is, until you saw how the boat moved.

Furthermore those detectives forgot one thing. Perhaps you saw what it was. Of course my petrol gauge is a bit odd; they can easily test it and show *that it sticks on the half-gallon mark.*

I'm sorry for Jim. I wish it hadn't happened. To be honest, I don't see any other way we could have won; but even Jim, who was a casual ambitious fellow, didn't mean to pay that price for it. He thought Davis would feel ill and give up in the middle of the paddle. But Davis went on rowing till his heart stopped.

# MORNING SWIM

BY

THEODORE BENTLEY

*from Liberty Magazine, January 22, 1938*

## A SWIMMING MURDER

*A fine and fiendish example of the superior crime "short short" story, Morning Swim contains the essential ingredient of all good crime yarns—a basis in universal experience and so a frightening quality. The simple "morning swim" at the beach—how often we have enjoyed one! But Mr. Bentley reminds us it can also be the means of committing a perfect crime.*

The chill December morning was six hours from midnight when the man awoke. His sleep had been the fitful sleep of the man with something on his mind.

He threw back the covers and walked to the window. Outside a shrieking wind was whipping the Pacific into a grey-white frenzy. As far as the eye could reach in either direction the beach was barren and deserted.

The man turned away from the window and lit a fire under a coffee-pot. While the coffee was brewing he removed his pyjamas and put on a pair of swimming trunks.

He was above middle height, a young man and a powerful one.

When the coffee was done he drank several cups. Then he opened the door and stood for a while looking down the beach—towards the north.

Satisfied, he ran down to the surf and plunged in. With sure, strong strokes he headed straight out and was soon lost to sight.

In another cabin, a half-mile to the northward of the first one, another figure was preparing to swim. The movements of this one were jerky and unsure. He glanced nervously over

## OUTDOOR SPORTS

towards the bed he had just abandoned. Then he turned away and walked to the door.

This man was older, a sagging, spare fifty.

He entered the water and began swimming. In contrast to the other swimmer's, his strokes were clumsy, inept. After several minutes he too could not be seen from shore.

Soon the paths of the two swimmers began to converge. Presently they were directly abreast of each other; a pair of invisible specks in the foaming ocean.

"Hello, Polk," the first swimmer called.

The older man started in surprise.

"Good morning." He looked at the other more closely. "I'm afraid I don't know you, do I?"

"No, I'm afraid you don't. I know *you*, though, Polk. My name's Martin."

"I see. Well, I'm glad to know you, Mr. Martin. You'll excuse me now. I've got to be getting back."

He began to swim towards shore. In four quick strokes Martin was in front of him.

"Just a moment. I want to talk to you."

Polk's tone stiffened. "Look here, what is this all about?"

"I wanted to talk to you—somewhere where we could be alone."

Polk laughed uncertainly. "How did you know I'd be here?"

"I've watched you, Polk. Many times. You swim every morning, don't you?"

"So? I don't understand what you're getting at."

"You will. It's a long story. It goes back to the day I met your wife. Why do you look like that, Polk? You didn't know, did you? No, you didn't—we were too careful. We fell in love, Polk. And you're standing between us. Our lives are too short to deny ourselves any longer. Polk, I'm going to drown you."

"This is no time for jokes, man."

"I know. I'm not joking."

Polk saw it. Terror-stricken, he tried to swim away.

Martin was on him instantly. They thrashed about in the water for a minute, then Polk's head went under. He slipped from Martin's grip and came up.

## MORNING SWIM

"Wait—wait, Martin!"

Martin pushed him under again. Then he slipped his legs around the older man's head like a vice and squeezed. He felt Polk weaken and sag and finally lurch towards the ocean floor.

Martin came up gasping for air. He treaded water, breathing deeply.

With the air he drank deep draughts of future, of freedom, of Virginia Polk.

Life could begin for them now.

With long easy strokes he headed for the point where he had entered the water. Where the body was found—just a simple case of drowning. There would be no evidence—there had been no witnesses.

When he emerged the beach was deserted.

Now to wait for word from Virginia. As soon as it was safe, she had said.

He stayed in his cabin all that day—nervous, waiting.

The next morning the sun broke on a dismal world. Martin stayed again in his cabin, and slowly there grew upon him a nameless dread. He got out the pair of steamer tickets they had purchased and read them over many times. When the sweat from his hands began to soften the cardboard slips he put them away. He started to pack his bag, thought better of it, and unpacked it again.

Towards nightfall he ventured up the beach halfway to Polk's house—a point where he could see and not be seen.

The house was in darkness. Where was she?

He walked back to his own cabin—resolved that if no word came by the following night he would go to her.

The next morning he could not eat his breakfast. He decided to go into town and get drunk. There might be news in town.

He had trouble with himself when he sat down at the bar. He crossed his legs to stop the shaking.

"Hello, Martin," the bartender said. "What'll it be?"

"A double rye, I guess, George."

When the bartender came back with his drink, Martin tried to speak naturally, unexcitedly:

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"Well, what's new with you, George?"

"Oh, nothing much, nothing much. You've probably heard the news from up your way, haven't you? No? Where you been? Louis Polk—you knew him, didn't you?"

Now—here it was. Martin steeled himself.

"I knew *of* him. But I didn't know him."

"Well, it seems he found out that his wife had been playin' around with some other guy. So the other mornin' he emptied his shotgun into her and then drowned himself."

# A SCHOOLMASTER ABROAD

BY

E. W. HORNUNG

*from The Crime Doctor*

DR. DOLLAR INVESTIGATES A TOBOGGANING MYSTERY

*Everyone is on grateful terms of familiarity with Raffles, Hornung's most celebrated creature. But the same writer's Dr. Dollar (The Crime Doctor) has become lost in the literary shuffle. Dr. Dollar is an unusual detective because he is far more the serious penologist and sociological preventer of crimes than he is an investigator of them. Yet in A Schoolmaster Abroad he makes one of the most penetrating deductions on forgery ever conceived and so must be admitted into the Valhalla of the Sleuths.*

## I

It is a small world that flocks to Switzerland for the Christmas holidays. It is also a world largely composed of that particular class which really did provide Dr. Dollar with the majority of his cases. He was therefore not surprised, on the night of his arrival at the great Excelsior Hotel, in Winterwald, to feel a diffident touch on the shoulder, and to look round upon the sunburned blushes of a quite recent patient.

George Edenborough had taken Winterwald on his wedding trip, and nothing would suit him and his nut-brown bride but for the doctor to join them at their table. It was a slightly embarrassing invitation, but there was good reason for not persisting in a first refusal. And the bride carried the situation with a breezy vitality, while her groom chose a wine worthy of the occasion, and the new-comer explained that he had arrived by the afternoon train, but had not come straight to the hotel.

"Then you won't have heard of our great excitement," said Mrs. Edenborough, "and I'm afraid you won't like it when you do!"

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"If you mean the strychnine affair," returned Dollar, with a certain deliberation, "I heard one version before I had been in the place an hour. I can't say that I did like it. But I should be interested to know what you both think about it all."

Edenborough returned the wine list to the waiter with sepulchral injunctions.

"Are you telling him about our medical scandal?" he inquired briskly of the bride. "My dear Doctor, it'll make your professional hair stand on end! Here's the local practitioner been prescribing strychnine pills warranted to kill in twenty minutes!"

"So I hear," said the crime doctor, dryly.

"The poor brute has been frightfully overworked," continued Edenborough, in deference to a more phlegmatic front than he had expected of the British faculty. "They say he was up two whole nights last week; he seems to be the only doctor in the place, and the hotels are full of fellows doing their level best to lay themselves out. We've had two concussions of the brain and one complicated fracture this very week. Still, to go and give your patient a hundred times more strychnine than you intended . . ."

And he stopped himself, as though the subject, which he had taken up with a purely nervous zest, was rather near home after all.

"But what about his patient?" adroitly inquired the doctor. "If half that one hears is true, he wouldn't have been much loss."

"Not much, I'm afraid," said Lucy Edenborough, with the air of a Roman matron turning down her thumbs.

"He's a fellow who was at my private school, just barely twenty-one, and making an absolute fool of himself," exclaimed Edenborough, touching his glass. "It's an awful pity. He used to be such a nice little chap, Jack Laverick."

"He was nice enough when he was out here a year ago," the bride admitted, "and he's still a sportsman. He won half the toboggan races last season, and took it all delightfully; he's quite another person now, and gives himself absurd airs on top of everything else. Still, I shall expect Mr. Laverick

## A SCHOOLMASTER ABROAD

either to sweep the board or break his neck. He evidently wasn't born to be poisoned."

"Did he come to grief last year, Mrs. Edenborough?"

"He only nearly had one of his ears cut off, in a spill on the ice run. So they said; but he was tobogganing again next day."

"Dr. Alt looked after him all right then, I hear," added Edenborough, as the champagne arrived. "But I only wish *you* could take the fellow in hand! He really used to be a decent chap, but it would take even you all your time to make him one again, Dr. Dollar."

The crime doctor smiled as he raised his glass and returned compliments across the bubbles. It was the smile of a man with bigger fish to fry. Yet it was he who came back to the subject of young Laverick, asking if he had not a tutor or somebody to look after him, and what the man meant by not doing his job.

In an instant both the Edenboroughs had turned upon their friend. Poor Mr. Scarth was not to blame! Poor Mr. Scarth, it appeared, had been a master at the preparatory school at which Jack Laverick and George Edenborough had been boys. He was a splendid fellow, and very popular in the hotel, but there was nothing but sympathy with him in the matter under discussion. His charge was of age, and in a position to send him off at any moment, as indeed he was always threatening in his cups. But there again there was a special difficulty: one cup was more than enough for Jack Laverick, whose weak head for wine was the only excuse for him.

"Yet there was nothing of the kind last year," said Mrs. Edenborough, in a reversionary voice, "at least, one never heard of it. And that makes it all the harder on poor Mr. Scarth."

Dollar declared that he was burning to meet the unfortunate gentleman; the couple exchanged glances, and he was told to wait till after the concert, at which he had better sit with them. Was there a concert? His face lengthened at the prospect, and the bride's eyes sparkled at his expense. She would not hear of his shirking it, but went so far as to cut dinner short in order to obtain good seats. She was one of those young women who have both a will and a way with them,



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and Dollar soon found himself securely penned in the gallery of an ambitious ballroom with a stage at the other end.

The concert came up to his most sardonic expectations, and he resigned himself to a boredom only intensified by the behaviour of some crude humorists in the rows behind. Indifferent song followed indifferent song, and each earned a more vociferous encore from those gay young gods. A not unknown novelist told dialect stories of purely territorial interest; a lady recited with astounding spirit; another fiddled no less courageously; but the back rows of the gallery were quite out of hand when a black-avised gentleman took the stage, and had not opened his mouth before those back rows were rows of Satan's reproving sin and clapping with unsophisticated gusto.

"Who's this?" asked Dollar, instantly aware of the change behind him. But even Lucy Edenborough would only answer, "Hush, Doctor!" as she bent forward with shining eyes. And certainly a hairpin could not have been dropped unheard before the dark performer relieved the tension by plunging into a scene from *Pickwick*.

It was the scene of Mr. Jingle's monologue on the Rochester coach—and the immortal nonsense was inimitably given. Yet nobody could have been less like the emaciated prototype than this tall tanned man, with the short black moustache, and the flashing teeth that bit off every word with ineffable snap and point.

"Mother—tall lady, eating sandwiches—forgot the arch—crash—knock—children look round—mother's head off—sandwich in her hand—no mouth to put it in——" and his own grim one only added to the fun and swelled the roar.

He waited darkly for them to stop, the wilful absence of any amusement on his side enormously increasing that of the audience. But when it came to the episode of Donna Christina and the stomach-pump, with the culminating discovery of Don Bolaro Fizzgig in the main pipe of the public fountain, the guffaws of half the house eventually drew from the other half the supreme compliment of exasperated demands for silence. Mrs. George Edenborough was one of the loudest

## A SCHOOLMASTER ABROAD

offenders. George himself had to wipe his eyes. And the crime doctor had forgot that there was such a thing as crime.

"That chap's a genius!" he exclaimed, when a double encore had been satisfied by further and smaller doses of Mr. Jingle, artfully held in reserve. "But who is he, Mrs. Edenborough?"

"Poor Mr. Scarth!" crowed the bride, brimming over with triumphant fun.

But the doctor's mirth was at an end.

"That the fellow who can't manage a bit of a boy, when he can hold an audience like this in the hollow of his hand?"

And at first he looked as though he could not believe it, and then all at once as though he could. But by this time the Edenboroughs were urging Scarth's poverty in earnest, and Dollar could only say that he wanted to meet him more than ever.

The wish was not to be gratified without a further side-light and a fresh surprise. As George and the doctor were repairing to the billiard-room, before the conclusion of the lengthy programme, they found a group of backs upon the threshold, and a ribald uproar in full swing within. One voice was in the ascendant, and it was sadly indistinct; but it was also the voice of the vanquished, belching querulous futilities. The cold steel thrusts of an autocratic Jingle cut it shorter and shorter. It ceased altogether, and the men in the doorway made way for Mr. Scarth, as he hurried a dishevelled youth off the scene in the most approved constabulatory manner.

"Does it often happen, George?" Dollar's arm had slipped through his former patient's as they slowly followed at their distance.

"Most nights, I'm afraid."

"And does Scarth always do what he likes with him—afterwards?"

"Always; he's the sort of fellow who can do what he likes with most people," declared the young man, missing the point. "You should have seen him at the last concert, when those fools behind us behaved even worse than to-night! It wasn't his turn, but he came out and put them right in about a second, and had us all laughing the next! It was just the same at school; everybody was afraid of Mostyn Scarth, boys

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and men alike; and so is Jack Laverick still—in spite of being of age and having the money-bags—as you saw for yourself just now.”

“Yet he lets this sort of thing happen continually?”

“It’s pretty difficult to prevent. A glass about does it, as I told you, and you can’t be at a fellow’s elbow all the time in a place like this. But some of Jack’s old pals have had a go at him. Do you know what they’ve done? They’ve taken away his Old Etonian tie, and quite right too!”

“And there was nothing of all this last year?”

“So Lucy says. I wasn’t here. Mrs. Laverick was, by the way; she may have made the difference. But being his own master seems to have sent him to the dogs altogether. Scarth’s the only person to pull him up, unless—unless you’d take him on, Doctor! You—you’ve pulled harder cases out of the fire, you know!”

They had been sitting a few minutes in the lounge. Nobody was very near them; the young man’s face was alight and his eyes were shining. Dollar took him by the arm once more, and they went together to the lift.

“In any case I must make friends with your friend Scarth,” said he. “Do you happen to know his number?”

Edenborough did—it was 144—but he seemed dubious as to another doctor’s reception after the tragedy that might have happened in the adjoining room.

“Hadn’t I better introduce you in the morning?” he suggested with much deference in the lift. “I—I hate repeating things—but I want you to like each other, and I heard Scarth say he was fed up with doctors!”

This one smiled.

“I don’t wonder at it.”

“Yet it wasn’t Mostyn Scarth who gave Dr. Alt away.”

“No?”

Edenborough shook his head as they left the lift together. “No, Doctor. It was the chemist here, a chap called Schickel; but for him Jack Laverick would be a dead man; and but for him again, nobody need ever have heard of his narrow shave. He spotted the mistake, and then started all the gossip.”

“I know,” said the doctor, nodding.

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"But it was a terrible mistake! Decigrams instead of milligrams, so I heard. Just a hundred times too much strychnine in each pill."

"You are quite right," said John Dollar quietly. "I have the prescription in my pocket."

"*You* have, Doctor?"

"Don't be angry with me, my dear fellow! I told you I had heard one version of the whole thing. It was Alt's. He's an old friend—but you wouldn't have said a word about him if I had told you that at first—and I still don't want it generally known."

"You can trust me, Doctor, after all you've done for me."

"Well, Alt once did more for me. I want to do something for him, that's all."

And his knuckles still ached from the young man's grip as they rapped smartly at the door of No. 144.

### II

It was opened a few inches by Mostyn Scarth. His raiment was still at concert pitch, but his face even darker than it had been as the crime doctor saw it last.

"May I ask who you are and what you want?" he demanded—not at all in the manner of Mr. Jingle—rather in the voice that most people would have raised.

"My name's Dollar and I'm a doctor."

The self-announcement, pat as a polysyllable, had a foreseen effect only minimized by the precautionary confidence of Dr. Dollar's manner.

"Thanks very much. I've had about enough of doctors."

And the door was shutting when the intruder got in a word like a wedge.

"Exactly!"

Scarth frowned through a chink just wide enough to show both his eyes. It was the intruder's tone that held his hand.

"What does that mean?" he demanded with more control.

"That I want to see you about the other doctor—this German fellow," returned Dollar, against the grain. But the studious phrase admitted him.

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"Well, don't raise your voice," said Scarth, lowering his own as he shut the door softly behind them. "I believe I saw you downstairs outside the bar. So I need only explain that I've just got my bright young man off to sleep, on the other side of those folding-doors."

Dollar could not help wondering whether the other room was as good as Scarth's, which was much bigger and better appointed than his own. But he sat down at the oval table under the electrolier, and came abruptly to his point.

"About that prescription," he began, and straightway produced it from his pocket.

"Well, what about it?" the other queried, but only keenly, as he sat down at the table, too.

"Dr. Alt is a very old friend of mine, Mr. Scarth."

Mostyn Scarth exhibited the slight but immediate change of front due from gentleman to gentleman on the strength of such a statement. His grim eyes softened with a certain sympathy; but the accession left his gravity the more pronounced.

"He is not only a friend," continued Dollar, "but the cleverest and best man I know in my profession. I don't speak from mere loyalty; he was my own doctor before he was my friend. Mr. Scarth, he saved more than my life when every head in Harley Street had been shaken over my case. All the baronets gave me up; but chance or fate brought me here, and this little unknown man performed the miracle they shirked, and made a new man of me off his own bat. I wanted him to come to London and make his fortune; but his work was here, he wouldn't leave it; and here I find him under a sorry cloud. Can you wonder at my wanting to step in and speak up for him, Mr. Scarth?"

"On the contrary, I know exactly how you must feel, and am very glad you have spoken," rejoined Mostyn Scarth, cordially enough in all the circumstances of the case. "But the cloud is none of my making, Dr. Dollar, though I naturally feel rather strongly about the matter. But for Schickel, the chemist, I might be seeing a coffin to England at this moment! He's the man who found out the mistake, and has since made all the mischief."

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"Are you sure it was a mistake, Mr. Scarth?" asked Dollar quietly.

"What else?" cried the other, in blank astonishment. "Even Schickel has never suggested that Dr. Alt was trying to commit a murder!"

"Even Schickel!" repeated Dollar, with a sharp significance. "Are you suggesting that there's no love lost between him and Alt?"

"I was not, indeed." Scarth seemed still astonished. "No. That never occurred to me for a moment."

"Yet it's a small place, and you know what small places are. Would one man be likely to spread a thing like this against another if there were no bad blood between them?"

Scarth could not say. The thing happened to be true, and it made such a justifiable sensation. He was none the less frankly interested in the suggestion. It was as though he had a tantalizing glimmer of the crime doctor's meaning. Their heads were closer together across the end of the table, their eyes joined in mutual probation.

"Can I trust you with my own idea, Mr. Scarth?"

"That's for you to decide, Dr. Dollar."

"I shall not breathe it to another soul—not even to Alt himself—till I am sure."

"You may trust me, Doctor. I don't know what's coming, but I shan't give it away."

"Then I shall trust you even to the extent of contradicting what I just said. I *am* sure—between ourselves—that the prescription now in my hands is a clever forgery!"

Scarth held out his hand for it. A less deliberate announcement might have given him a more satisfactory surprise; but he could not have looked more incredulous than he did, or subjected Dollar to a cooler scrutiny.

"A forgery with what object, Dr. Dollar?"

"That I don't pretend to say. I merely state the fact—in confidence. You have your eyes upon a flagrant forgery."

Scarth raised them twinkling. "My dear Dr. Dollar, I saw him write it out myself!"

"Are you quite sure?"

"Absolutely, Doctor! This lad, Jack Laverick, is a pretty

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handful; without a doctor to frighten him from time to time, I couldn't cope with him at all. His people are in despair about him—but that's another matter. I was only going to say that I took him to Dr. Alt myself, and this is the prescription they refused to make up. Schickel may have a spite against Alt, as you suggest, but if he's a forger I can only say he doesn't look the part."

"The only looks I go by", said the crime doctor, "are those of the little document in your hand."

"It's on Alt's paper."

"Anybody could get hold of that."

"But you suggest that Alt and Schickel have been on bad terms?"

"That's a better point, Mr. Scarth, that's a much better point," said Dollar, smiling and then ceasing to smile as he produced a magnifying lens. "Allow me to switch on the electric standard, and do me the favour of examining that handwriting with this loop; it's not very strong, but the best I could get here at the photographer's shop."

"It's certainly not strong enough to show anything fishy, to my inexperience," said Scarth, on a sufficiently close inspection.

"Now look at this one."

Dollar had produced a second prescription from the same pocket as before. At first sight they seemed identical.

"Is this another forgery?" inquired Scarth, with a first faint trace of irony.

"No. That's the correct prescription, rewritten by Alt at my request, as he is positive he wrote it originally."

"I see now. There are two more noughts mixed up with the other hieroglyphs."

"They happen to make all the difference between life and death," said Dollar gravely. "Yet they are not by any means the only difference here."

"I can see no other, I must confess." And Scarth raised his eyes just as Dollar's fell from his broad brown brow.

"The other difference is, Mr. Scarth, that the prescription with the strychnine in deadly decigrams has been drawn backward instead of being written forward."

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Scarth's stare ended in a smile.

"Do you mind saying all that again, Dr. Dollar?"

"I'll elaborate. The genuine prescription has been written in the ordinary way—*currente calamo*. But forgeries are not written in the ordinary way, much less with running pens; the best of them are written backwards, or rather they are *drawn upside down*. Try to copy writing *as* writing, and your own will automatically creep in and spoil it; draw it upside down and wrong way on, as a mere meaningless scroll, and your own formation of the letters doesn't influence you, because you are not forming letters at all. You are drawing from a copy, Mr. Scarth."

"You mean that I'm deriving valuable information from a handwriting expert," cried Scarth, with another laugh.

"There are no such experts," returned Dollar, a little coldly. "It's all a mere matter of observation, open to everybody with eyes to see. But this happens to be an old forger's trick; try it for yourself, as I have, and you'll be surprised to see how much there is in it."

"I must," said Scarth. "But I can't conceive how you can tell that it has been played in this case."

"No? Look at the start, *Herr Laverick*, and at the finish, *Dr. Alt*. You would expect to see plenty of ink in the *Herr*, wouldn't you? Still plenty in the *Laverick*, I think, but now less and less until the pen is filled again. In the correct prescription, written at my request to-day, you will find that this is so. In the forgery the progression is precisely the reverse; the *t* in *Alt* is full of ink, but you will find less and less till the next dip in the middle of the word *Mahlzeit* in the line above. The forger, of course, dips oftener than the man with the running pen."

Scarth bent in silence over the lens, his dark face screwed awry. Suddenly he pushed back his chair.

"It's wonderful!" he cried softly. "I see everything you say. Dr. Dollar, you have converted me completely to your view. I should like you to allow me to convert the hotel."

"Not yet," said Dollar, rising, "if at all as to the actual facts of the case. It's no use making bad worse, Mr. Scarth, or taking a dirty trick too seriously. It isn't as though the forgery



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had been committed with a view to murdering your young Laverick."

"I never dreamed of thinking that it was!"

"You are quite right, Mr. Scarth. It doesn't bear thinking about. Of course, any murderer ingenious enough to concoct such a thing would have been far too clever to drop out *two* noughts; he would have been content to change the milligrams into centigrams, and risk a recovery. No sane chemist would have dispensed the pills in decigrams. But we are getting off the facts, and I promised to meet Dr. Alt on his last round. If I may tell him, in vague terms, that you at least think there may have been some mistake, other than the culpable one that has been laid at his door, I shall go away less uneasy about my unwarrantable intrusion than I can assure you I was in making it."

It was strange how the balance of personality had shifted during an interview which Scarth himself was now eager to extend. He was no longer the mesmeric martinet who had tamed an unruly audience at sight; the last of Mr. Jingle's snap had long been in abeyance. And yet there was just one more suggestion of that immortal, in the rather dilapidated trunk from which the swarthy exquisite now produced a bottle of whisky, very properly locked up out of Laverick's reach. And weakness of will could not be imputed to the young man who induced John Dollar to cement their acquaintance with a thimbleful.

### III

It was early morning in the same week; the crime doctor lay brooding over the most complicated case that had yet come his way. More precisely it was two cases, but so closely related that it took a strong mind to consider them apart, a stronger will to confine each to the solitary brain-cell that it deserved. Yet the case of young Laverick was not only much the simpler of the two, but infinitely the more congenial to John Dollar, and not the one most on his nerves.

It was too simple altogether. A year ago the boy had been all right, wild only as a tobogganer, lucky to have got off with a few stitches in his ear. Dollar heard all about that business

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from Dr. Alt, and only too much about Jack Laverick's subsequent record from other informants. It was worthy of the Welbeck Street confessional. His career at Oxford had come to a sudden ignominious end. He had forfeited his motoring licence for habitually driving to the public danger, and on the last occasion had barely escaped imprisonment for his condition at the wheel. He had caused his own mother to say advisedly that she would "sooner see him in his coffin than going on in this dreadful way"; in writing she had said it, for Scarth had shown the letter addressed to him as her "last and only hope" for Jack; and yet even Scarth was powerless to prevent that son of Belial from getting "flown with insolence and wine" more nights than not. Even last night it had happened, at the masked ball, on the eye of this morning's races! Whose fault would it be if he killed himself on the ice run after all?

Dollar writhed as he thought upon this case; yet it was not the case that had brought him out from England, not the reason of his staying out longer than he had dreamed of doing when Alt's telegram arrived. It was not, indeed, about Jack Laverick that poor Alt had telegraphed at all. And yet between them what a job they could have made of the unfortunate youth!

It was Dollar's own case over again—yet he had not been called in—neither of them had!

Nevertheless, when all was said that could be said to himself, or even to Alt—who did not quite agree—Laverick's was much the less serious matter; and John Dollar had turned upon the other side, and was grappling afresh with the other case, when his door opened violently without a knock, and an agitated voice spoke his name.

"It's me—Edenborough," it continued in a hurried whisper. "I want you to get into some clothes and come up to the ice run as quick as possible!"

"Why? What has happened?" asked the doctor, jumping out of bed as Edenborough drew the curtains.

"Nothing yet. I hope nothing will——"

"But something has!" interrupted the doctor. "What's the matter with your eye?"

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"I'll tell you as you dress, only be as quick as you can. Did you forget it was the toboggan races this morning? They're having them at eight instead of nine, because of the sun, and it's ten to eight now. Couldn't you get into some knickerbockers and stick a sweater over all the rest? That's what I've done—wish I'd come to you first. They'll *want* a doctor if we don't make haste!"

"I wish you'd tell me about your eye," said Dollar, already in his stockings.

"My eye's all right," returned Edenborough, going to the glass. "No, by Jove, it's blacker than I thought, and my head's still singing like a kettle. I shouldn't have thought Laverick could hit so hard—drunk *or* sober."

"That madman?" cried Dollar, looking up from his laces. "I thought he turned in early for once in a way."

"He was up early, anyhow," said Edenborough, grimly, "but I'll tell you the whole thing as we go up to the run, and I don't much mind who hears me. He's a worse hat even than we thought. I caught him tampering with the toboggans at five o'clock this morning!"

"Which toboggans?"

"One of the lot they keep in a shed just under our window, at the back of the hotel. I was lying awake and I heard something. It was like a sort of filing, as if somebody was breaking in somewhere. I got up and looked out, and thought I saw a light. Lucy was fast asleep; she still is, by the way, and doesn't know a thing."

"I'm ready," said Dollar. "Go on when we get outside."

It was a very pale-blue morning, not a scintilla of sunlight in the valley, neither shine nor shadow upon clambering forest or overhanging rocks. Somewhere behind their jagged peaks the sun must have risen, but as yet no snowy facet winked the news to Winterwald, and the softer summits lost all character against a sky only less white than themselves.

The village street presented no difficulties to Edenborough's gouties and the doctor's nails; but there were other people in it, and voices travel in a frost over silent snow. On the frozen path between the snow-fields, beyond the village, nails were not enough, and the novice depending upon them stumbled

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and slid as the elaborated climax of Edenborough's experience induced even more speed.

"It was him all right—try the edge, Doctor, it's less slippery. It was that young brute in his domino, as if he'd never been to bed at all, and me in my dressing-gown not properly awake. We should have looked a funny pair in—— Have my arm, Doctor."

"Thanks, George."

"But his electric lamp was the only light. He didn't attempt to put it out. 'Just tuning up my toboggan,' he whispered. 'Come and have a look.' I didn't and don't believe it was his own toboggan; it was probably that of Captain Strong's, he's his most dangerous rival; but, as I tell you, I was just going to look when the young brute hit me full in the face without a moment's warning. I went over like an ox, but I think the back of my head must have hit something. There was daylight in the place when I opened the only eye I could."

"Had he locked you in?"

"No; he was too fly for that; but I simply couldn't move till I heard voices coming, and then I only crawled behind a stack of garden chairs and things. It was Strong and another fellow—they did curse to find the whole place open! I nearly showed up and told my tale, only I wanted to tell you first."

"I'm glad you have, George."

"I knew your interest in the fellow—besides, I thought it was a case for you," said George Edenborough simply. "But it kept me prisoner till the last of the toboggans had been taken out—I only hope it hasn't made us too late!"

His next breath was a devout thanksgiving, as a fold in the glistening slopes showed the top of the ice run, and a group of men in sweaters standing out against the fir-trees on the crest. They seemed to be standing very still. Some had their padded elbows lifted as though they were shading their eyes. But there was no sign of a toboggan starting, no sound of one in the invisible crevice of the run. And now man after man detached himself from the group, and came leaping down the subsidiary snow-track meant only for ascent.

But John Dollar and George Edenborough did not see all of this. A yet more ominous figure had appeared in their own

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path, had grown into Mostyn Scarth, and stood wildly beckoning to them both.

"It's Jack!" he shouted across the snow. "He's had a smash—self and toboggan—flaw in a runner. I'm afraid he's broken his leg."

"Only his leg!" cried Dollar, but not with the least accent of relief. The tone made Edenborough wince behind him, and Scarth in front look round. It was as though even the crime doctor thought Jack Laverick better dead.

He lay on a litter of overcoats, the hub of a wheel of men that broke of itself before the first doctor on the scene. He was not even insensible, neither was he uttering moan or groan; but his white lips were drawn away from his set teeth, and his left leg had an odd look of being no more a part of him than its envelope of knickerbocker and stocking.

"It's a bust, Doctor, I'm afraid," the boy ground out as Dollar knelt in the snow. "Hurting? A bit—but I can stick it."

Courage was the one quality he had not lost during the last year; nobody could have shown more during the slow and excruciating progress to the village, on a bobsleigh carried by four stumbling men; everybody was whispering about it. Everybody but the crime doctor, who headed the little procession with a face in keeping with the tone which had made Edenborough wince and Scarth look round.

The complex case of the night—this urgent one—both were forgot in Dollar's own case of years ago. He was back again in another Winterwald, another world. It was no longer a land of Christmas trees growing out of mountains of Christmas cake; the snow melted before his mind's eye; he was hugging the shadows in a street of toy-houses yielding resin to an August sun, between green slopes combed with dark pines, under a sky of intolerable blue. And he was in despair; all Harley Street could or would do nothing for him. And then—and then—some forgotten ache or pain had taken him to the little man—the great man—down this very turning to the left, in the little wooden house tucked away behind the shops.

How he remembered every landmark—the hand-rail down the slope—the little porch—the bare stairs, his own ladder between death and life—the stark surgery with its uncom-

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promising appliances in full view! And now at last he was there with such another case as his own—the minor case that he had yet burned to bring there—and there was Alt to receive them in the same white jacket and with the same simple countenance as of old!

They might have taken him on to the hotel, as Scarth indeed urged strongly; but the boy himself was against another yard, though otherwise a hero to the end.

"Chloroform?" he cried faintly. "Can't I have my beastly leg set without chloroform? You're not going to have it off, are you? I can stick anything short of that."

The two doctors retired for the further consideration of a point on which they themselves were not of one mind.

"It's the chance of our lives, and the one chance for him," urged Dollar vehemently. "It isn't as if it were such a dangerous operation, and I'll take sole responsibility."

"But I am not sure you have been right," demurred the other. "He has not even had concussion, a year ago. It has been only the ear."

"There's a lump behind it still. Everything dates from when it happened; there's some pressure somewhere that has made another being of him. It's a much simpler case than mine, and you cured *me*. Alt, if you had seen how his own mother wrote about him, you would be the very last man to hesitate!"

"It is better to have her consent."

"No—nobody's—the boy himself need never know. There's a young bride here who'll nurse him like an angel and hold her tongue till doomsday. She and her husband may be in the secret, but not another soul!"

And when Jack Laverick came out of chloroform, to feel a frosty tickling under the tabernacle of bedclothes in which his broken bone was as the Ark, the sensation was less uncomfortable than he expected. But that of a dull deep pain in the head drew his first complaint, as an item not in the estimate.

"What's my head all bandaged up for?" he demanded, fingering the turban on the pillow.

"Didn't you know it was broken, too?" said Lucy Edenborough gravely. "I expect your leg hurt so much more that you never noticed it!"

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### IV

Ten days later Mostyn Scarth called at Dr. Alt's, to ask if he mightn't see Jack at last. He had behaved extremely well about the whole affair; others in his position might easily have made trouble. But there had been no concealment of the fact that injuries were not confined to the broken leg, and the mere seat of the additional mischief was enough for a man of sense. It is not the really strong who love to display their power. Scarth not only accepted the situation, but voluntarily conducted the correspondence which kept poor Mrs. Laverick at half Europe's length over the critical period. He had merely stipulated to be the first to see the convalescent, and he took it as well as ever when Dollar shook his head once more.

"It's not our fault this time, Mr. Scarth. You must blame the sex that is privileged to change its mind. Mrs. Laverick has arrived without a word of warning. She is with her son at this moment, and you'll be glad to hear that she thinks she finds him an absolutely changed character—or, rather, what he was before he ever saw Winterwald a year ago. I may say that this seems more or less the patient's own impression about himself."

"Glad!" cried Scarth, who for the moment had seemed rather staggered. "I'm more than glad; I'm profoundly relieved! It doesn't matter now whether I see Jack or not. Do you mind giving him these magazines and papers, with my love? I am thankful that my responsibility's at an end."

"The same with me," returned the crime doctor. "I shall go back to my work in London with a better conscience than I had when I left it—with something accomplished—something undone that wanted undoing."

He smiled at Scarth across the flap of an unpretentious table, on which lay the literary offering in all its glory of green and yellow wrappers; and Scarth looked up without a trace of pique, but with an answering twinkle in his own dark eyes.

"Alt exalted—restored to favour—Jack reformed character—born again—forger forgot—forging ahead, eh?"

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It was his best Mr. Jingle manner; indeed, a wonderfully ready and ruthless travesty of his own performance on the night of Dollar's arrival. And that kindred critic enjoyed it none the less for a second strain of irony, which he could not but take to himself.

"I have not forgot anybody, Mr. Scarth."

"But have you discovered who did the forgery?"

"I always knew."

"Have you tackled him?"

"Days ago!"

Scarth looked astounded. "And what's to happen to him, Doctor?"

"I don't know." The doctor gave a characteristic shrug. "It's not my job; as it was, I'd done all the detective business, which I loathe."

"I remember," cried Scarth. "I shall never forget the way you went through that prescription, as though you had been looking over the blighter's shoulder! Not an expert—modest fellow—pride that apes!"

And again Dollar had to laugh at the way Mr. Jingle wagged his head, in spite of the same slightly caustic undercurrent as before.

"That was the easiest part of it," he answered, "although you make me blush to say so. The hard part was what reviewers of novels call the 'motivation'."

"But you had that in Schickel's spite against Alt."

"It was never quite strong enough to please me."

"Then what was the motive, Doctor?"

"Young Laverick's death."

"Nonsense!"

"I wish it were, Mr. Scarth."

"But who is there in Winterwald who could wish to compass such a thing?"

"There were more than two thousand visitors over Christmas, I understand," was the only reply.

It would not do for Mostyn Scarth. He looked less than politely incredulous, if not less shocked and rather more indignant than he need have looked. But the whole idea was a reflection upon his care of the unhappy youth. And he said so



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in other words, which resembled those of Mr. Jingle only in their stiff staccato brevity.

"Talk about 'motivation'!—I thank you, Doctor, for that word—but I should thank you even more to show me the thing itself in your theory. And what a way to kill a fellow! What a roundabout, risky way!"

"It was such a good forgery," observed the doctor, "that even Alt himself could hardly swear that it was one."

"Is *he* your man?" asked Scarth, in a sudden whisper, leaning forward with lighted eyes.

The crime doctor smiled enigmatically. "It's perhaps just as lucky for him, Scarth, that at least he could have had nothing to do with the second attempt upon his patient's life."

"What second attempt?"

"The hand that forged the prescription, Scarth, with intent to poison young Laverick, was the one that also filed the flaw in his toboggan, in the hope of breaking his neck."

"My dear Doctor," exclaimed Mostyn Scarth, with a pained shake of the head, "this is stark, staring madness!"

"I only hope it was—in the would-be murderer," rejoined Dollar gravely. "But he had a lot of method; he even did his bit of filing—a burglar couldn't have done it better—in the domino Jack Laverick had just taken off!"

"How do you know he had taken it off? How do you know the whole job wasn't one of Jack's drunken tricks?"

"What whole job?"

"The one you're talking about—the alleged tampering with his toboggan," replied Scarth, impatiently.

"Oh! I only thought you meant something more." Dollar made a pause. "Don't you feel it rather hot in here, Scarth?"

"Do you know, I do!" confessed the visitor, as though it were Dollar's house and breeding had forbidden him to volunteer the remark. "It's the heat of this stove, with the window shut. Thanks so much, Doctor!"

And he wiped his strong, brown, beautifully shaven face; it was one of those that require shaving more than once a day, yet it was always glossy from the razor; and he burnished it afresh with a silk handkerchief that would have passed through a packing-needle's eye.

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"And what are you really doing about this—monster?" he resumed, as if accepting the monster's existence for the sake of argument.

"Nothing, Scarth."

"Nothing? You intend to do nothing at all?"

Scarth had started, for the first time; but he started to his feet, while he was about it, as though in overpowering disgust.

"Not if he keeps out of England," replied the crime doctor, who had also risen. "I wonder if he's sane enough for that?"

Their four eyes met in a protracted scrutiny, without a flicker on either side.

"What I am wondering," said Scarth deliberately, "is whether this Frankenstein effort of yours exists outside your own imagination, Dr. Dollar."

"Oh! he exists all right," declared the doctor. "But I am charitable enough to suppose him mad—in spite of his method *and* his motive,"

"Did he tell you what that was?" asked Scarth with a sneer.

"No; but Jack did. He seems to have been in the man's power—under his influence—to an extraordinary degree. He had even left him a wicked sum in a will made since he came of age. I needn't tell you that he has now made another, revoking——"

"No, you need not!" cried Mostyn Scarth, turning livid at the last moment. "I've heard about enough of your mare's nests and mythical monsters. I wish you good morning, and a more credulous audience next time."

"That I can count upon," returned the doctor at the door. "There's no saying what they won't believe—at Scotland Yard!"

# THE YOUNG GOD

BY

H. C. BAILEY

*from Mr. Fortune's Case Book*

MR. FORTUNE GETS A CRICKETER OUT OF TROUBLE

*Cricket is not a sport which lends itself as a background for crime, but it was felt that a collection of Sporting Detective Stories would not be complete without one such story. The Young God is a typical Mr. Fortune story and gives him the opportunity once again to show the long-suffering Lomas of Scotland Yard how tricky cases should be handled.*

The front of Brighton flowered in June sunshine. Conspicuously jaunty among that flippant crowd tripped the Hon. Sidney Lomas, Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department. By the lawns he was stopped. His adviser on the medical and other problems of crime stood in his way.

"Are you up already?" Mr. Fortune inquired. "'How doth the little busy bee improve each shining hour!'" He put his hands behind his back and surveyed Lomas with reverent admiration. "Well, well. It took a long time but it's very beautiful." For the hat and the suit and the socks and the shoes and the playful tie were a melody on the theme of brown sherry. "You look like something that's left on the stage when the chorus goes."

"If you will rise at dawn and dress like a curate on holiday, of course you feel lonely."

"I never feel lonely," said Mr. Fortune with indignation. "I am hungry. Hence this bitterness. As for my clothes"—he looked down complacently at the black tie and the dark grey flannel which draped his solid form—"my nature is respectable."

"You are getting fat," Lomas agreed. "But what's the use? While you keep that choir-boy's complexion no one will take you seriously."

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The cherubic face of Mr. Fortune smiled.

"That's your corrupt mind. All simple souls believe in me."

"Hence your success with juries, Reginald."

Reggie Fortune shuddered and turned away. It was understood that no word of shop must be spoken at Brighton. Both men's nerves had been frayed in the struggle to convict the reluctant alderman of the murder of the inspector of taxes. You remember that popular but ugly case? They had vowed that a long week-end should be free of any thought of crime.

Lomas let his eyeglass fall. "Sorry. Absolutely no excuse," he said, and took Reggie's arm. "Can aught atone?"

"I was thinking of that Sauterne for lunch," said Reggie.

They made their way slowly through the Sunday crowd impeded by opulence expanding itself and women displaying for their admirers what Art can do for Nature.

"The world is too much with us," Lomas said. "It is like being in a musical comedy, Reginald. We are the crowded chorus. Rather gaudy, rather noisy we are. No wonder chorus girls look bored."

"We're a musical comedy and the audience jumbled together. I feel like somebody in the dress-circle, Lomas. So innocent and humble."

"There's somebody who knows he isn't."

Reggie Fortune looked at the man, a magnificent creature towering out of the crowd with shoulders worthy of his height and a sunburnt, aquiline face. He had a cluster of admirers round him, women and men. The passing crowd sent many a glance at him. He was well aware of it.

"Worship him, don't they?" Lomas chuckled. "One of England's gods."

"He's a noble young god," said Reggie. "It makes you feel alive to look at him. I saw him score his try in the last international. Took the ball off the feet of the Scottish forwards and cut right through. And we all went mad. Very uplifting, Lomas, old thing."

"Oh, a splendid animal," Lomas agreed. "The big blonde beast in perfection. These be your gods, O Israel."

For this young man was Douglas Charlbury, centre three-quarter for England and the most dashing bat in the merry

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Sandshire team, and his portraits and his praises were in all the newspapers.

After lunch Reggie Fortune discovered that Sandshire were to play Sussex next day and was joyful.

"Lomas, old thing, we will go watch the young god sport. If he don't bat, he'll be fielding, which is almost as good. The music of motion. Full orchestra."

But it was not to be. When Reggie propped up his paper against the coffee-pot on Monday morning he saw a headline: "Sir Rodney Trale Missing." It appeared that Sir Rodney, who lived on the South Downs, had not been seen since Friday night, and his family wanted news of him. Reggie sighed. For Sir Rodney Trale was the uncle of Douglas Charlbury. It was not likely that the nephew would be playing cricket for anyone till the uncle was found.

Reggie finished his lonely breakfast—Lomas was invisible before noon—and wandered out. When he came back to the hotel he saw a lank back which turned to show him a gaunt, dark face that grinned.

"Mordan?" Reggie groaned. "Go away, Mordan."

"Good morning, sir," said Inspector Mordan briskly. "Lucky I found you. Mr. Lomas in, sir?"

"Don't be so hearty, Mordan, I can't bear it. Mr. Lomas is in bed. Or in his bath."

"I'll have to see him, sir." The inspector came affectionately close and murmured, "Looks like a big thing, Mr. Fortune."

Reggie groaned again and led him to the lift. They found Lomas sitting in front of his dressing-table perfecting that work of art, the wave in his hair.

"Very sorry, sir," said Inspector Mordan to the reproachful face which looked out of the mirror. "It's the Trale case. They've found the body and called us in."

"What the devil is the Trale case?" asked Lomas peevishly.

And Inspector Mordan told him at length.

Sir Rodney Trale lived with his sister and his niece in the ancient house of Chantries, which stands in a park under the Downs. Sir Rodney, who was a great man on the Turf, had his training stables close by. On Friday evening he walked across the park to dine with his trainer. He ate that dinner,

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they talked horses, and he left the house about half-past ten.

"That's what the trainer says," Lomas murmured.

"Just so, sir," Inspector Mordan nodded. "Well, after that, Sir Rodney vanished. No one was sitting up for him. On Saturday morning his valet found that his bed hadn't been slept in. The family rang up the trainer. They looked about for him. On Saturday evening they called in the police.

"They didn't hurry," Lomas murmured.

Inspector Mordan sniffed. "No, sir. He was rather a dark horse, was Sir Rodney. They might have thought he had some little game on. Police search began yesterday. This morning they got to dragging the lake in the park and they found him." He turned his beady eyes on Reginald. "That looks natural enough, as you might say. Gentleman after dinner tumbles into his lake. But the chief constable has 'phoned us to take it up and bring an expert. It's quite providential your being down here already, Mr. Fortune."

"Providential!" Reggie gasped. "No, Mordan, you have not a nice mind."

They packed themselves into a car and drove away up the valley where the turbid Adur winds under the buttresses of the chalk and on through the ancient peace of Steyning, till the steep northern scarp of the Downs rose above them and they came upon great trees and the wide, misty, green spaces of the Weald.

The park of Chantries is a pleasant place of little hills and little cliffs clothed in ancient velvet turf. The house of Chantries is mellow red brick of the time when Wren was playing with Hampton Court.

Mr. Fortune shook his head at it. "Elegant, isn't it?" he murmured. "And rather paltry. Same like you and me, Lomas. An insult to the everlasting hills."

"Don't be romantic, Fortune. A little realism is what we need," Lomas chuckled. "There wasn't anything elegant about Rodney Trale."

At the door they were met by a bluff military chief constable, who said it was a bad business, and he was devilish glad to see them. They came into a hall hung with family

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portraits and Reggie drifted from one to the other, while the chief constable told Lomas that he had nothing to tell him.

"We've got the body and that's all we've got. I hope your man can make something of it. I've got Trale's own doctor here, but he's no good at this sort of thing."

"Fortune!" Lomas called, and Reggie turned reluctantly from the portrait of a seventeenth-century Douglas Charlbury, the bold, aquiline face of the young god of football and cricket looking out of a periwig.

"Very vigorous and persistent family," Reggie murmured.

"Trale blood always comes out, sir," said the chief constable. "Strong stock. Well, you'll want to see Sir Rodney."

"That is one factor in the problem," said Reggie dreamily.

Sir Rodney's doctor was a pleasant old fellow. He received the great Mr. Fortune with the homage an anxious father would give to a capable son come to take trouble off his hands.

"A terrible affair, Mr. Fortune. I fear there must have been foul play. I shall be so relieved to have you take the case. You see——"

And Sir Rodney was not pleasant to see. He lay in his sodden evening clothes, a bulky man of sixty. His face was bruised in ugly colours, his lip was cut and swollen, and, thus injured, the fierce aquiline features had a look of horrible malignity. Reggie bent over him. Reggie's hands went to his eyes . . . to his mouth . . .

And after a long while:

"Well, well. What did you make of it, doctor?" said Reggie.

"I—I'm very much afraid those injuries were inflicted before death, Mr. Fortune."

"Yes, yes. There was a fight, and then he was drowned. And rather a curious fight. Yes, that's all he can tell us."

The old doctor gave a sigh of relief. "That is death by drowning, then."

"Yes,"—Reggie gazed at him—"yes. He died because he couldn't get out of the water. But why couldn't he get out of the water? And how did he get in?"

"Really, Mr. Fortune, I have no idea!" the old doctor cried.

"He had though," said Reggie, looking at the rage on the dead face, and the old doctor shuddered.

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When they left that room two people came out of another, a young woman, short and frail, an old woman, even smaller, who leaned heavily on her arm. White hair and the wrinkles of ill-health in the elder could not disguise how like they were in delicacy of feature and in the gentle simplicity of their dark eyes.

"Dr. Turner"—the young woman spoke—"can you tell us anything?" And Reggie Fortune liked her soft voice.

"I am most distressed, Miss Charlbury. I'm afraid I must tell you—your poor uncle—there must have been foul play. Mr. Fortune—oh, Miss Trale, Miss Charlbury, this is Mr. Reginald Fortune, the great authority on these cases——" Mr. Fortune made his bow. The two gentle faces looked at him with cold curiosity. "Mr. Fortune has formed the opinion that Sir Rodney was—was murdered."

"Oh!" said Miss Charlbury.

"No, I wouldn't say that," Reggie murmured. "I didn't say it. What I have said is that Sir Rodney met with violence before his death."

"Is there any difference?" said Miss Charlbury.

"Oh, Joyce! Oh, my dear!" Miss Trale wept.

"It's very good of you to help us, Mr. Fortune," said Miss Charlbury, and led her aunt away.

Downstairs Lomas and the chief constable were closeted together in a little library, more like an office, turning over many papers.

"Well, Fortune, what about it?" Lomas cried.

"The man was drowned. Before drowning he was knocked about with fists by a rather hefty fellow. And somehow he got something poked into his right eye, something thin and narrow and sharp."

"That didn't kill him?"

"Oh, no. But it must have hurt. He might have lost the sight of the eye if he had lived. Nothing worse."

"How did he get stabbed in the eye if the other fellow was using fists?"

"Lomas dear, I wasn't the referee. Nor am I a clairvoyant. He might have fallen on a spike—a splinter—a stump."

"But can you swear it was a fellow with a punch that hit him?"



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"A very hefty fellow with a powerful left," said Mr. Fortune.

"That's murder," said the chief constable, and lay back in his chair and looked with horror at Lomas. "What a terrible thing for the family!"

"They're rather a curious family," Reggie murmured.

"My dear sir!" the chief constable cried, "one of the best in the county."

Lomas, who was again turning over papers, passed him one. It became clear to Reggie Fortune that he could be more use somewhere else. He drifted away. The family portraits in the hall again attracted him. The pattern of face and body which Sir Rodney Trale and his nephew both possessed was plainly hereditary. Big, fair, aquiline, high-coloured, the men of the family had been like that for centuries. But another strain showed itself. Many of the daughters of the house were of that dark, frail, gentle beauty which had come down to Miss Trale and Miss Charlbury.

Reggie turned to find the family doctor behind him. The old man had been up to see Miss Trale. She had felt the shock sadly, and her health had never been good. Reggie said something civil.

"Poor dear lady!" the old man sighed. "Her brother to go first and like this! She was devoted to him. How often that happens, Mr. Fortune! Weak women give their lives up to watch over strong men."

"Yes. Yes. This is a curious family, doctor. All the men are big and strong and most of the women weak."

"Very true," the old doctor sighed. "Splendid fellows, the Trale men. Have you ever seen Douglas Charlbury? His mother was a Trale, of course. He is Miss Joyce's brother. Curious how different they are. Poor dear Joyce! Between her uncle and her brother"—he pulled up short—"ah, Mr. Fortune, it's these weak women who save men's bodies and souls."

It occurred to Mr. Fortune that they had not saved Sir Rodney's body, and he lacked confidence about the dead man's soul. But he did not say so. The old doctor bustled off, and Mr. Fortune wandered out into the park.

He proposed to go down to the trainer's house and see what

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might be seen on the path by which Sir Rodney had walked his last walk. But he was diverted by the garden from business, which is one of his bad habits, and so he came into the park by a walk between noble yew hedges in which hollows were cut for stone seats. Where the rolling turf of the park opened before him he saw something glitter on the ground and picked up a little piece of greenish-brown quartz, carved into the likeness of a face—a face with a queer, long nose. He frowned at it and looked about him. As he stood he was hidden from the park, but the path was not far away, and when he walked on he saw the lake gleam in the sunshine.

To the lake he went. The path came close to it, where the bank overhung the green water in a little white cliff. There, whether he fell or was thrown, it was probable Sir Rodney had gone in. And the water was deep there. It would not have been easy to get out again in the dark up that slippery chalk, and Sir Rodney had been battered, dazed, perhaps, or stunned, before he went in.

The grass was trampled and grey. That must have been done by the men dragging the lake. Reggie could make nothing of it, but as he moved to and fro he saw a scrap of something whiter than the chalky grass. It was a chip of bone or ivory. It went into his pocket-book with the quartz face as he heard steps behind him.

"Well, sir, not much here, is there?" said Inspector Mordan. "They've stamped out anything there was."

"Is this where they found him?"

"Out there. In ten feet of water. Not far from the bank. He couldn't swim, they say."

"I dare say he didn't feel much like swimming."

"What, sir, was he dead before he was in the water?"

"No, no. He went in alive. But he'd been badly hammered."

"My oath, he had!" Inspector Mordan grinned. "I've found that out, Mr. Fortune. This way, sir." He led on down the path. "See, there's blood. And big footprints there in the damp stuff. That's him, or somebody his size. Now, look here, sir." By a spinney two or three hundred yards further on the inspector stopped and pointed. The turf was torn and broken by deep footmarks and there were scattered stains of blood.

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"What do you make of that, Mr. Fortune?" The Inspector was triumphant. "That's a fight all right."

"Two big men rather violent," Reggie murmured. "Anything else, Mordan?"

The Inspector smiled. In the long grass at the edge of the spinney were the prints of large feet.

"There was only one man in it, Mr. Fortune. He stood there and smoked a cigarette." Inspector Mordan held out the stump of it. "He could see Sir Rodney coming a long way off, and when the old man came he went for him."

"And he was a big fellow and he smokes Aristides cigarettes," Reggie murmured. "Yes. You have it all, Mordan. Except one thing. How did Sir Rodney get drowned?"

"The fellow may have knocked him out and thrown him in the lake."

Reggie measured the distance with his eye. It was some quarter of a mile. "Hefty throw," he murmured.

"Of course he'd have to carry the body to the bank," the Inspector explained angrily. "Or Sir Rodney may have run off and the fellow came after him and finished him. Or Sir R. may have tumbled in half dazed."

"Yes. Yes. There's lots of ways it could have happened. None of 'em what you'd call likely."

"All the same, it did happen, Mr. Fortune."

"And that's what's most unlikely. Well, well. Now we want a big fellow who smokes Aristides cigarettes. He ought to throw some light on it."

"I should say so," said Inspector Mordan. "Coming up to the house, sir? I must see Mr. Lomas."

But Reggie let him go and wandered hither and thither in the park and out of it. He found nothing, but in the lane where a small car had stopped, another Aristides cigarette.

When he came back to the house Sir Rodney's trainer, Captain Ferne, was reporting himself to Lomas and the chief constable. Captain Ferne, who possessed the physique and face of a jockey, had nothing to say and kept saying so. He had bidden good night to Sir Rodney on his doorstep at half-past ten on Friday night and had never seen him again. Sir Rodney was quite sober. There was no one about. Did he know of any

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one who had a grudge against Sir Rodney? A successful owner of racehorses always had enemies, and Sir Rodney had been very successful.

"So I have heard," said Lomas dryly.

But the trainer knew of nobody in the district, no one who was likely to be violent, could not suggest anyone.

Then Douglas Charlbury strode in, brusque and imperious. "Mr. Lomas? Which is Mr. Lomas? I'm told you want to see me, sir."

"I hoped to have seen you before, Mr. Charlbury."

"I am playing for Sandshire, sir. We have been in the field all day."

"Really?" Lomas put up his eyeglass. "Your uncle was found dead this morning."

"So I have heard, but I don't understand why you want me."

"There is evidence that he was murdered, Mr. Charlbury."

"What evidence?"

"He was assaulted before he was drowned."

"Where?"

"Here, in the park, on his way home from Captain Ferne's house."

Douglas Charlbury exchanged a glance with Captain Ferne, which was not affectionate. "Who did it? Any evidence about that?"

"Can you help us, Mr. Charlbury?"

"I haven't been living here for over a year. I was on tour with the Sandshire eleven."

"You have no suspicion of anyone?"

Douglas Charlbury gave an angry laugh. "My uncle wasn't altogether popular. Ferne knows that."

"I don't know what you mean?" cried Captain Ferne.

Again Douglas Charlbury laughed. "If Ferne can't tell you, no one can."

"Really?" said Lomas. "I must own you disappoint me, Mr. Charlbury."

"I don't know what you expected," said Douglas Charlbury. "Anything more, sir? I want to see my people."

Lomas shook his head, and Charlbury strode out.

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"I'm afraid they were on bad terms, sir." Captain Ferne shook his head. "Very sad. Sir Rodney felt it."

"Really?" said Lomas, and got rid of Captain Ferne too.

"He's rather like a weasel, you know," Reggie murmured. "What's between them, the weasel and our young god? An angry young god it is."

"Young brute!" said Lomas. "It's an ugly business, Fortune."

"Yes. Yes. A curious family," said Mr. Fortune.

The chief constable shook his head.

"I fear so. Only too true, sir. A most distressing case."

"Quite," said Lomas briskly. "Well, Fortune, you went round with Mordan, didn't you? Do you agree?"

"Mordan touches the spot as ever. A large fellow lurked by the spinney smoking an Aristides and set about Sir Rodney. Yes, we have no objections."

"Anything to add?"

"Well, there was another Aristides smoked in the lane where a small car stopped. That might have a bearing. Also there was this by the lake"—he displayed his fragment of ivory—"and that by the garden hedge." He produced the quartz face.

"Asiatic, eh?" said Lomas. "Chinese, is it?"

"Lomas dear, you shouldn't say things like that. It exposes the department. Not Asiatic. The other side of the world. American. Say Honduras or Yucatan. A work of the Maya culture."

Lomas said with some satisfaction that he had never heard of the Mayas. "What's the other trinket? A Babylonian tooth-pick? Or a bit of Cleopatra's paper-knife?"

"I don't know. But I'm not proud of it, Lomas."

"Whatever the things are, they may have been in the park for weeks. The bit of glass"—here Reggie groaned—"wasn't near the crime; and if you know why anybody uses a scrap of bone to punch a man's head and drown him, I don't."

"There's such a lot of things I don't know. That's why I'm humble," said Reggie sadly. "Is there anything you do know, Lomas? What was in those papers you were browsing on?"

"Douglas Charlbury had a violent quarrel with Sir Rodney. It began with a racing dispute—that fishy affair in the Rutlandshire."

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The chief constable sighed and shook his head. "Sir Rodney was getting a bad name on the turf."

"There isn't a bad name Douglas didn't call him. And it got to threats, Fortune."

"Well, well! And then a large man who knew Sir Rodney's habits comes and hammers him."

"Something for your young god to explain, isn't it?"

"But he did. He had an alibi."

"Yes, they often have." Lomas smiled. "We shall see."

But they did not see at the inquest. For the caution of Lomas decided to offer no more than the medical evidence, and the verdict was murder against persons unknown.

It was afterwards that Reggie was called to Scotland Yard and found with Lomas Mr. Montague Finchampstead, the Public Prosecutor, that large and florid man. "Why do you look so happy, Finch?" he asked anxiously. "It flurries me."

"Finchampstead hopes to take action in the Trale murder," Lomas explained.

"Zeal, all zeal," Reggie murmured.

"I think it will probably be my duty, Fortune," said Mr. Finchampstead. "I have therefore called a consultation. On the facts brought before me I consider there is a strong case against Douglas Charlbury. I do not of course wish to charge him with murder unless I can be reasonably sure of a conviction." Here Lomas yawned. "I shall be glad of your opinion on that."

"You're not a moral man, Finch," said Reggie sadly. "You want to know if you can convict him. You ought to want to know if he did it!"

"I see no difference," Finchampstead rebuked him with dignity. "I consider the matter as a lawyer."

"That's what I complain of," Reggie murmured.

"Be good enough to consider the case. Douglas Charlbury had quarrelled with his uncle about the way Sir Rodney conducted his racing affairs. Sir Rodney's horse should have won the Rutlandshire handicap, and it was not placed and Charlbury lost money——"

"Like the rest of the world," said Lomas. "The old man was a blackguard."

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"Quite possible," Finchampstead swept on. "There were other cases. Charlbury wrote furious letters. He suspected his uncle of arranging that the favourite should not win the Leeds Cup, and we have a letter in which he declares violently that he will interfere. That was written three days before the murder. On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday Charlbury was playing cricket at Southampton. The match finished at noon. The rest of the team went on to Brighton by train. Charlbury had with him a small two-seater car. He left Southampton in the afternoon alone. He and his car were seen in the road near Chantryies that evening. We have a tramp who will swear that he saw a small car like Charlbury's deserted in the lane by the park that night. We found traces of that car, large footprints, and the stumps of Aristides cigarettes. We know Charlbury smokes that brand. We know that Sir Rodney was attacked by someone familiar with his habits. I understand you are prepared to testify that Sir Rodney's injuries were inflicted by a man of great physical strength. The cumulative force of this evidence is very strong. I shall be glad to hear if you have any doubt that it proves Charlbury guilty of the murder."

"Proves?" Reggie Fortune searched for a cigar and bit it. "What is proof? We don't often get it, do we? Too many unknown quantities in the calculation, Finch. But we've hanged men on weaker cases!"

"In fact, you have no doubt yourself that Charlbury is guilty?"

"I don't know," Reggie said slowly. "Have you thought about the unknown quantities, Finch? My quartz face, my bit of ivory? They don't fit with Charlbury."

"They don't fit with anything," Lomas grumbled.

"I consider them irrelevant," said Finchampstead. "There is no reason to connect them with the crime at all. I should not produce them in the case."

"Well, well," Reggie sighed. "It's a wonderful thing, the legal mind. You'll have to produce me, Finch. And I shall have to say there was a punctured wound in the man's right eye, which could not have been made by a fist. That's rather relevant."

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"You said yourself that he might have fallen on a stump, or a splinter, or a spike."

"Yes. But we didn't find spike, or splinter, or stump!"

"What does it matter? It is a trivial injury. You say so. And the assault was violent. Come, Fortune, have you any real doubt Charlbury was the murderer?"

"Oh, Lord, yes! Some. I don't like the case, Finch. I can't satisfy myself. And you don't satisfy me."

"Do you advise me not to bring Charlbury into court?"

"If I were on the jury—would I convict?" Reggie said slowly. "I don't know, Finch. I don't know."

"It will be a doosed unpopular prosecution," Lomas grumbled. "The shady old uncle who robbed the public rigging races is done in, and you put in the dock this handsome nephew who's a god on cricket and footer grounds. Damn it, Finch, you'll be hooted in court."

"I am aware it will be unpopular," said Finchampstead. "That is another reason for pressing the case. I will let you know my decision." He went out in majesty.

"Well-meaning man," Reggie murmured. "Does it all for the best. We are for it, Lomas. And confound him, I can't say he's wrong."

Lomas at least was right. The prosecution was most unpopular. All England and the newspapers rallied round Douglas Charlbury. His portraits and the stories of his tries and his centuries were everywhere, and demonstrated to the satisfaction of all nice people that he was an innocent hero foully wronged. Yet a brutal bench of magistrates committed him for trial. His counsel was content to say nonchalantly that Mr. Charlbury preferred to reserve his defence, but had a perfect answer to the charge. And the opinion of the junior bar was that he would want all the answer he had got. The carefully marshalled evidence for the Crown was impressive.

When the case was tried before little Justice Golding, cross-examination made a hole or two in the prosecution. The tramp who swore to seeing a car in the lane became a vague and unconvincing tramp. Inspector Mordan could not swear that the footprints in the long grass would fit Douglas Charlbury's feet, and confessed that they were not precise footprints. Inspector



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Mordan admitted that many people smoked Aristides cigarettes. Inspector Mordan could not explain how the body came from the scene of the fight to the lake. Mr. Fortune, unshaken, unshakable upon his evidence that the injuries were inflicted before death by a strong man's fists, declined to offer any theory of the wound in the eye.

"Not such an injury as you would expect in a fight, Mr. Fortune? No. You don't know how it happened? No. In fact you don't know how Sir Rodney met his death?"

"Yes. I know he was drowned after he had been hit."

"But you don't know how he was drowned?"

"I don't know," Mr. Fortune agreed gravely. "I don't know."

Counsel turned to the jury.

"He doesn't know! The Crown's own expert doesn't know, gentlemen! And a man is charged with murder!"

There was a murmur in court. The junior bar looked at each other, and someone said: "That's torn it!"

Little Mr. Justice Golding took snuff like a bird pecking, put his head on one side and peered at the prisoner. Douglas Charlbury, filling the dock, made everybody else in court look commonplace, and his air of disdain for the whole affair was thought very noble by the writers of sketches of the trial.

Counsel for the defence opened his case confidently. The jury would observe that he had nothing to answer, for the Crown had not proved that a murder had been committed. But in order that no shadow of suspicion should remain on Mr. Douglas Charlbury, he would show that Mr. Charlbury did not meet and could not have met his uncle on the night that Sir Rodney was drowned.

Reggie Fortune looked at Lomas. "Nothing like an alleybi, Sammy, nothing," he murmured.

Douglas Charlbury went into the box. He swore that he had not seen Sir Rodney for many months. On the night of his death he was travelling in his own small car from Southampton to Brighton. He came by way of Chichester, Houghton Bridge, and Steyning. It was therefore possible that he had been seen on the road near Chantryes. But his car had not been in the lane by the park. He had not stopped there. He had dined at

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the Four-in-Hand inn on the Grinstead Road, which was kept by an old servant of his father's, and spent the night there. He had been smoking with the landlord all the evening till he went to bed.

Cross-examination only drew from him a justification of the violence of his letters to Sir Rodney. He had no doubt that Sir Rodney and his trainer had arranged for their horses to lose races.

"And for you to lose money?" counsel sneered.

"Half the sportsmen in England lost money, sir."

"And you naturally resented the loss."

"I resented the foul play, sir. I resented the disgrace to my family. We have run straight for three hundred years."

"What did you mean by your threat to prevent Sir Rodney playing tricks with the favourite for the Leeds Cup?"

"I meant that I would expose him, sir."

Counsel let him go. Counsel could make nothing of the landlord of the Four-in-Hand inn and the landlady and their daughter. They swore that Mr. Douglas had come to the house at eight and not gone out again. They were quite clear and confident.

Little Mr. Justice Golding dozed while counsel made speeches. Little Mr. Justice Golding took snuff and said the case had been put before the jury with great ability. The jury might consider that the evidence justified the prosecution in bringing the prisoner to trial. They would observe that the manner of Sir Rodney's death remained obscure. The medical expert, Mr. Fortune, a very eminent man—the little judge made believe to search for a passage in his notes—said he didn't know. A dramatic pause. The little judge looked over his glasses at the jury: "He did not know, gentlemen," he repeated in a sepulchral voice. And if they believed the evidence for the defence, they would see that however Sir Rodney met his death, it was not at the hands of the prisoner. That evidence was not answered. They must dismiss from their minds all prejudice against Sir Rodney, and consider their verdict.

"Poor old Finch," Mr. Fortune murmured. "Well meanin' man. Did it all for the best."

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The jury were not out of court five minutes. They found Douglas Charlbury innocent. And there was a cheer and the little judge was dead to it and took snuff and looked down his nose at the very red face of Mr. Montague Finchampstead.

"Come on, Fortune," said Lomas. "Better get away before the crowd hangs us on the lamp-posts."

But in the Press seats, a plump reporter, the "crime specialist" of the *Daily Rag*, said:

"It was old Fortune got him off. He's deep, is Fortune. I wonder what his little game is?"

In the morning the papers were fuller than ever of Douglas Charlbury. He was a champion of British sport: he had suffered gloriously to vindicate the purity of the turf: and it was obvious to every sane man that he hadn't killed his uncle, and the officials who ordered the prosecution were fools and knaves. Thus logically the popular Press, diverging into invective against the wickedness of owners who rigged races and robbed poor backers. And what was the Jockey Club doing?

Over the telephone Mr. Fortune asked Lomas to lunch. "Can you eat, Reginald?" said Lomas. "I have no appetite. I hear a mob in Whitehall howling for my blood."

"How's Finch this morning?"

A chuckle came over the wire. "Finch has gone sick."

"So he ought to be," said Mr. Fortune. "Come along. Elise is putting on one of her best souffles. I told her you wanted comfort."

Not till that souffle was eaten and the two men looked at each other with the eyes of those who have enjoyed pure Art did Mr. Fortune come to business. He peeled a nectarine, he tasted it, he sipped his Barsac.

"Do you remember the Trale case, Lomas?" he said dreamily.

"Good Lord, don't be brutal," Lomas groaned. "I was happy."

"Curious family," Reggie murmured. "None of the family came to the trial, I think, Lomas."

"Miss Trale has been very ill—pneumonia."

"What happens to the old man's estate?"

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"He left no will. Divided between Douglas and his sister—and Miss Trale, if she lives."

"Yes, a curious family. I wonder. Lots of unknown quantities. I wonder. Lomas, old thing, have you heard of anybody down at Chantries who has anything to do with Yucatan?"

"Good Lord!" said Lomas again. "What are you thinking of now?"

"My quartz face. I wish you'd have somebody look about for a person from Yucatan."

"Damme, I should have thought you had had enough of the case. You've got one man off."

"Yes, that's on my conscience," said Reggie Fortune. "I'm not satisfied with the case, Lomas. There's more than we've found in it. Who drowned the beggar?"

"I know it's unsatisfactory, and it's been deuced bad for the department. I can send Mordan down to see if he can hear of any connection with Central America. But it's snapping at shadows, Fortune."

"Yes, send Mordan. He snaps all right," said Reggie.

So Inspector Mordan, who was in a fierce and hungry state of mind, again took the air on the South Downs. And after a fortnight he came back with what his subordinates privately described as his tail up. His report was that he had been through Chantries and the neighbourhood with a small tooth-comb and found no one there who was known to have anything to do with Central America.

Lomas yawned. "Out with it, Mordan! You've got more than that! I see it in your bloodthirsty eye!"

Inspector Mordan smiled. "I have, sir! There was a man handy when Sir Rodney was murdered who had just come from Central America. And he went back there just after."

Lomas lit a cigarette. "Come over to drown Sir Rodney, I suppose?"

"That's as may be, sir!" Inspector Mordan rebuked this flippancy. "Close to Chantries there's a widow lady lives, Mrs. Stanton. She has a son, a geologist he is, who's been doing work in Central America for an oil company. Just before the murder he was staying with her. He went off on the Saturday morning—that's the day after, sir—sailed for the West Indies

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that afternoon, and he's been out there ever since. But now they say he's coming back." Inspector Mordan smiled again. "I reckon he thinks it's all clear now the trial's over."

"Any link between Mr. Stanton and the Trale family?"

"I couldn't make out anything particular, sir. His mamma's friendly with the ladies at Chanceries. He used to go there when he was at home. Nothing marked, as you might say. But it looks to me as if we were getting warm."

"I'll ring up Mr. Fortune," said Lomas.

Mr. Fortune, much against his will, was extracted from a hammock among the roses of his riverside garden and led by a stern parlourmaid to the telephone. "Fortune speaking," he groaned, "speaking in his sleep. You are a bad dream, Lomas. Go away."

"We've found your Central American," said Lomas. "Come and hear all about him, Reginald. Interesting but enigmatic fellow."

"I do not like you, Lomas," said Mr. Fortune sadly. "But you may dine with me. Good-bye."

So it was under the tea rambler which has heard so many tales of crime that Lomas told him of the discovery of Charles Stanton. Mr. Fortune blew smoke rings into the moonlight. "What does it come to?" he said dreamily. "Our Central American is down there before the murder. He remains abroad till the trial is over and all is peace. Then he comes back. He is a bore, but for that, alas! we cannot hang him. He bothers me."

"Well, you wanted him. And we've found him. What about it?"

Mr. Fortune sighed. "You will be logical, Lomas. Let us see Charles of Yucatan. Let us talk to him!"

The Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department wrote to Mr. Charles Stanton and asked him to call. A lean, brown man presented himself to Lomas and Mr. Fortune. He had a mouth which shut tight. His manner was stiff.

"Do sit down, Mr. Stanton. Sorry to trouble you, but I hope you'll be able to help us." Lomas was at his blandest. "Now I wonder if you can tell me, do you know anything of this trinket?"

Stanton took up the quartz face and let it lie in the palm

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of his hand. "It's mine," he said; and showed no emotion. "A mascot of mine. The thing is a bit of Maya work I picked up in Yucatan."

"I wonder if you ever gave it to anyone?" Lomas suggested smoothly. "Or lent it to someone, perhaps?"

Stanton frowned. "No, I didn't!" he said sharply. "I always carried the thing till I lost it."

"Could you tell me when that was?"

"I can't put a date to it. When I was last in England."

"Or where you lost it?"

"If I had known I should have looked for it."

"Yes, I suppose you would. Can you tell me how you lost it, Mr. Stanton?"

"I've no idea. You are asking me the deuce of a lot of questions, sir."

"So sorry you should feel that. Well, Mr. Stanton, I must ask you one more. Your quartz face was found in the park at Chanceries just after the murder of Sir Rodney Trale and close to the scene of the murder. Can you give me any explanation of that."

Stanton stood up. "No!" he said. "I'm wasting your time, Mr. Lomas! You won't get any further!"

"Really, Mr. Stanton, you're not doing yourself justice!"

"I'm the judge of that, sir!"

"You force me to ask you another question. Why did you leave the country immediately after the murder?"

Stanton laughed. "Why don't you give me the usual warning, anything I say may be used as evidence against me?"

"I have been asking you to assist us in investigating a crime," said Lomas gravely. "Do you wish me to understand you decline?"

"I am not responsible for what you understand, sir. Good day!" And out he went.

"Deeper and deeper yet," Reggie murmured.

Lomas was using his telephone to give instructions that Mr. Stanton should be watched. "A bold fellow," he smiled. "Not really as clever as he thinks he is, Reginald. He shouldn't have said quite so much if he was going to dry up when things got awkward."

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"I wonder?" Reggie murmured. "He knows something all right, but I wonder what he knows." He blinked a dreamy eye at Lomas.

"He knows Mr. Charles Stanton had a hand in the murder."

Mr. Fortune smiled. "Dear Lomas! That's what he meant you to think."

That night Lomas received a telegram from Douglas Charlbury. It was imperious. It instructed Lomas that he must be in his office next morning to receive Douglas Charlbury, who had something to say to him.

"The young god!" Mr. Fortune chuckled as he heard it read, and Lomas damned its impudence. "But what makes him want to talk? Can it be Charles, his friend? Charles wasn't talkative. Someone's sitting up and taking notice."

And Lomas said the cursed case was a nightmare.

In the morning Douglas Charlbury marched in upon them bigger than ever (so they have complained), more vigorous, more arrogant.

"Who's this?" he scowled at Reggie. "I'm here to talk to you and nobody else, Mr. Lomas."

"Mr. Fortune is my colleague. Mr. Fortune knows all about your case."

"Does he? I think not!"

"I shall not hear you except in his presence."

Douglas Charlbury laughed. "Oh, if you want your fellows to know what an ass you've been, I don't care. Mr. Fortune, isn't it, the wonderful medical expert? You didn't cut much ice at my trial. Better try again, doctor. Now, Mr. Lomas, you've been trying to drag Charles Stanton into this murder. Well, now you listen to me. I won't have it!"

Lomas put up his eyeglass. "Did I understand you to say you—you wouldn't have it?"

"Don't put on side. You can't carry it. Yes, I said I won't have it. You can't touch Charles Stanton, and you shan't touch him. You can't do anything, that's how you stand. The case is finished."

"Because Mr. Douglas Charlbury was acquitted? I'm afraid that leaves us with a murderer at large."

## THE YOUNG GOD

"Murderer nothing! Because I was acquitted and I killed the man. You meddle with anyone else, and the first thing you know I'll tell the world."

Reggie sank deeper into his chair. Lomas stared a long minute. Then he said carefully: "Have you come here to confess you murdered your uncle?"

"No. A jury said I didn't. You can't try me again. I'm innocent. But I swear to Heaven I killed him!"

"Then you confess you committed perjury at your trial? And brought three witnesses to swear a false alibi?"

"They believed what they swore, good souls. That's no perjury. And I—my God, I don't answer to you for what I did! You get up any dirty case against Charles Stanton, or anyone else, and I'll own it all. I've got you by the short hairs, and don't you forget it!"

He stamped out.

Lomas lay back in his chair. "Good Lord!" he gasped again and again. "Good Lord! That is the biggest bluff that I ever met!"

"Was it bluff?" Reggie murmured. "He meant it all."

"Did he? How can you tell? We can't call his bluff. If we had a case against Stanton and he came for the defence and swore he did the murder himself, half the jury would say he was a noble, self-sacrificing hero, and the other half wouldn't convict against his evidence. And he—he's been found innocent, and we've nothing fresh against him but this melodramatic confession. Deuce take him, he has us beat!"

"Yes, yes. A dashing player at any game," said Reggie. "Not a nice man to have against you, Lomas, old thing."

"Sir Rodney found that out, poor devil."

"I wonder," said Reggie Fortune, "who Douglas Charlbury's playing for? Give the young god his due, he always plays for his side."

"He always plays to the gallery," Lomas growled. "Damme, I believe he killed his uncle to get into the papers. It's a mad case, Fortune."

"No," said Reggie, "no, I don't think so. There's something we haven't got. And somebody's had some luck."

"It's not me!" Lomas laughed bitterly.



## OUTDOOR SPORTS

That night a letter came to Reggie Fortune. The old family doctor of Chantryies wished to consult him about Miss Trale. An attack of pneumonia had left her very weak and she did not gain strength. The doctor was himself unable to suggest any treatment but rest and careful nursing.

She had expressed a very strong wish to see Mr. Fortune, and if Mr. Fortune could give the time, it would be a kindness.

In the morning Reggie Fortune lay in his car and watched the dim blue line of the Downs come clear of the mist till Chanctonbury stood sharp. He wondered whom he would meet at Chantryies. He did meet the old doctor, who was all apologies for troubling the great Mr. Fortune. A simple case, he feared. An old lady exhausted by illness, he knew of nothing for her but quiet and the grace of God. But she had been so anxious Mr. Fortune should come.

Reggie nodded gravely. It appeared to him that the old doctor knew something he did not mean to say.

Joyce Charlbury came into the hall, pale and worn. Reggie found himself looking into tragic eyes. "I hope we've done right, Mr. Fortune," the girl said.

"Yes. I think so," said Reggie Fortune.

The frail bosom rose. "Be kind to her. Oh, be kind," she said faintly.

In a big room to which the sunlight came in many colours through the old uneven glass of an oriel window, Miss Trale lay in bed, a tiny shape which hardly raised the coverlet. Her face was grey as her hair.

Her nurse rose as they came, set by her bedside an ebony stick, and flitted out.

"Only Mr. Fortune," Miss Trale said.

Joyce looked at her and drew the old doctor away.

Miss Trale turned laboriously and looked at Reggie. "You know why I sent for you," she said, "I killed my brother."

Reggie sat down by the bedside and took her pulse in his hand. "I'm a doctor, not a policeman, Miss Trale," he said gently.

"I believe you mean to do right. I have tried to do right. I read what you said at Douglas's trial. Oh, if I had known!

## THE YOUNG GOD

If I had known! But I was ill, and they told me nothing. My poor boy!"

"Douglas is safe."

"But now you are trying to accuse Charles Stanton. It wasn't he, Mr. Fortune. He did nothing. I killed Rodney. And—and I'm glad!" She fell back panting.

"You need not fear for Mr. Stanton," Reggie said gently.

"I want you to know. I want to make sure there is nobody, nobody but me. Rodney was wicked. He played foul, he always did. But we kept it hidden till this rascal Ferne came to him. Then he began to cheat with his horses. Do you know what that meant to us, Mr. Fortune? Our colours have been on the Turf a hundred years, and he—he had his horses run crooked. A Trale of Chantries! That was why Douglas quarrelled with him. But he went on. Then Douglas heard he was playing tricks with a big race. And that night—Douglas came that night to stop him. They met down there in the park. It was he struck Douglas first, Mr. Fortune. I saw him. I was out there with my darling Joyce. Charles Stanton was coming to say good-bye to her before he went away, and Rodney had forbidden her to have him in the house—oh, that was like Rodney—and while they talked beyond the garden I watched in case Rodney should come. Douglas and Rodney fought, and Douglas knocked him down and left him. And Rodney came on swearing and found me. I am lame, you know. I don't move very quickly. He said I had brought Douglas to beat him, and he struck at me. I lifted my stick to keep him off—my ivory stick—and he broke it. I hit him in the face—I think it went into his eye. That——"

"That was what I found. I see now. That didn't kill him, Miss Trale."

"No. But he fell into the lake. And I threw the stick into the water and went away, and he was drowned. And I found Joyce and brought her back to the house. I did not tell her then. I left him. I did it. It was no one but me, Mr. Fortune. Do you understand? Do you believe me?"

"I believe you, Miss Trale," said Reggie Fortune. "I understand everything. There will be no more trouble."

"For no one?"

## OUTDOOR SPORTS

"Neither for you nor anyone else. It is finished."

"I—I had to do it," she said feebly. "I am not sorry, Mr. Fortune. He—he made us ashamed." She looked at Reggie Fortune, she took up the ebony stick by the bedside and tapped and the nurse came.

"You will have no more trouble, Miss Trale," Reggie said. "There is rest now, only rest. Good-bye." He bowed over her hand and turned away to meet at the door Joyce Charlbury. She drew him out.

"Is that true—what you said?" she whispered eagerly. Reggie looked down into her dark wild eyes. "Yes. No more trouble. No more fear. It's finished."

"Ah!" She put her hand to her brow and trembled.

"Yes, you knew all the while. It's been hardest for you."

"Me?" she laughed. "Oh, Douglas had worse."

"He played the game," Reggie smiled. "You've all played the game. Good-bye, Miss Charlbury." And he went down to the hall where the old doctor was waiting for him under those family portraits of large arrogant men and frail women. "Yes. A curious family, doctor," said Mr. Fortune.

## INDOOR SPORTS

Football, baseball, fishing, golf and so on are the sports of the overt ones, the outdoor people. But what of the sedentary, the "indoors" people?

We debated long and hard whether those indoor pursuits which provide relaxation to so many millions of persons should be represented in this volume.

And finally we decided to include them, for while poker may not be a true "sport," it is the only game which furnishes an energetic play-outlet to millions; ping-pong, of course, is a household favourite; and chess, if not the "sport" of kings, is certainly their game!



# ACE HIGH

BY

PETER CHEYNEY

SLIM CALLAGHAN AVERTS A POKER SCANDAL

*Poker is a sophisticated game; Mr. Cheyney is a sophisticated writer; Slim Callaghan is the most sophisticated detective we know of in fiction (and possibly in real life as well). Ace High is the result one might expect from such a combination.*

Lord Priorton—a perfect replica of the stage nobleman—rose from the desk and advanced to meet Callaghan. His face was long, lean, distinguished; his drooping but well-trimmed grey moustache gave him the appearance, Callaghan thought, of an unhappy seal.

He said: "Sit down please, Mr. Callaghan." He opened a silver box of cigarettes, handed it to Callaghan. He went on: "Like most other people of my class, Mr. Callaghan, I've very little money. In fact I've nothing except this house, my cottage in the country, and, when I've paid my taxes, a few hundreds a year to live on. But I have one thing—my pride. And I'm afraid it has received a severe shock."

Callaghan said: "That's too bad! And you think I can do something to help about it?"

The peer nodded. "It's not only a matter of pride, but of reputation," he said, "and also—" he paused for a second—"of some money."

"I see," said Callaghan. "Supposing you tell me about it."

Priorton said: "As you probably know, Mr. Callaghan, I used to be a great gambler. Well, I still gamble a little. From time to time I have a few friends in here, give them dinner and we play cards. Such a party was held here last week." He sighed. "Little did I realise when I arranged it," he went on, "what the results were to be."

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Callaghan said: "So the results weren't so good, hey? I suppose you knew the people you were playing cards with?"

Lord Priorton nodded. "I know them all very well," he said. "The party consisted of two men, a woman and myself. We were playing poker. One of the men was a rich American—George Vandeler—who is over here on business; the other man—a young man of thirty—Eustace Willhaven, the eldest son of my old friend Hubert Willhaven; the lady, a charming widow—Mrs. Melody Vazeley—is the sister of another good friend of mine, Charles Venning. Last, there was, of course, myself. In other words," continued the peer gloomily, "there was no one who is not very well known to me. You understand?"

"I understand perfectly," said Callaghan. "Go on, Lord Priorton. And who did what to who?"

The other nodded. He said: "Exactly! You've put it very succinctly, Mr. Callaghan. Who did what to who! To cut a long story short, I was very lucky, and when the settlement came I had won just over three thousand pounds. The upshot of it was that Eustace Willhaven owed me three thousand five hundred—a very nice sum."

"Did he mind losing the money?" asked Callaghan.

"Good heavens, no," said Priorton. "Anyway, he knew his father would pay—his father always does pay. He's a rich man and even if he does keep Eustace short of money he's only too glad to settle his gambling debts when he loses and even more delighted when his son wins."

Callaghan asked: "And did Eustace settle?"

"Not then," said Priorton. "He said laughingly that he couldn't give me a cheque on his own bank because he'd only a few pounds in his account, but that if I wouldn't mind he would arrange things with his father and send a cheque round to me in the course of the next day. Well . . . he did so."

"I see. And what happened?" asked Callaghan.

Priorton took a cigarette from the silver box on the table. He lit it. Callaghan noticed that the hand that held the lighter was shaking a little.

Priorton said: "The cheque was an open cheque. I went round to Eustace's bank to cash it. Well, they wouldn't cash

## ACE HIGH

it. They marked it 'Orders not to pay' and gave it back to me."

Callaghan nodded. "Not so good," he said. "So Eustace Willhaven had stopped payment of the cheque. Why?"

Priorton shook his head. "I don't know," he said gloomily.

Callaghan asked: "I suppose Eustace's father—Hubert Willhaven—isn't hard up?"

Priorton smiled. "Don't worry about that," he said. "Willhaven is practically a millionaire. Three thousand five hundred means nothing to him. That's what I can't understand."

Callaghan said: "I see. You mean that Eustace must have a really serious reason for stopping payment of this cheque?"

"Precisely," said Priorton.

Callaghan drew on his cigarette. He said: "It's odd, isn't it? I suppose Willhaven knew his son had been playing cards here?"

"Good heavens, yes," said Priorton. "Young Willhaven plays here at least once a month. Several times his father's been here and played with him, or stood by and watched the game."

Callaghan said: "What do you want me to do?"

"First of all," said the peer. "I'm fearfully worried about Willhaven having stopped that cheque. Quite obviously, he or his father must *think* they've got a good reason for doing so. They may think that I'm going to tell people that Eustace stopped payment of a cheque for a debt of honour, and he'll naturally want to defend himself against such an accusation. He may say things that will react against my character.

"Secondly, I want the money, Mr. Callaghan. Three thousand five hundred pounds is a lot to me."

Callaghan asked casually: "Lord Priorton, did it ever occur to you to ring up Eustace Willhaven and ask him why he'd stopped payment of that cheque?"

Priorton nodded his head. "It did occur to me," he said. "I rang up Eustace, and he said that he was fearfully sorry about it, but that he did it because his father *ordered* him to stop payment—he didn't know why."

"I see," said Callaghan. "You didn't speak to the father?"

"No," said Priorton. "I think it's his business to explain his action to *me*!"



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Callaghan said: "You're quite right." He got up. "Well, I'll do my best," he said.

Priorton asked: "What are you going to do, Mr. Callaghan?"

Callaghan grinned. He said: "Perhaps it would be better if I didn't tell you. What people don't know can't hurt 'em."

Priorton nodded. He said: "About your fee. You know I'm pretty hard up."

Callaghan said: "I'll take a chance on you, Lord Priorton. I think you've told me the truth. If I get that cheque paid, I'll take the odd five hundred. If I don't, I'll charge you nothing. How's that?"

"Very sportin'!" said the peer.

Callaghan stopped Eustace Willhaven on his way out of the Berkeley Buttery. He said:

"Excuse me, Mr. Willhaven, my name's Callaghan. I'm a private detective. I'm trying to clear up a small point that's worrying a client of mine—Lord Priorton. It's about that cheque you gave him in settlement of your gambling losses."

Eustace Willhaven said: "Well, really! Do you think this is a good place to discuss it?"

"It's as good as any other, isn't it?" retorted Callaghan. "Do you know why your father told you to stop that cheque?"

Willhaven adjusted his eyeglass. He looked seriously at Callaghan. He said:

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Callaghan, I don't. I don't know why my father told me to stop that cheque. But if you knew anything about my father, you'd know he's not likely to do a thing like that without good reason. Good-day to you!"

Hubert Willhaven—tall, distinguished, ascetic looking—listened attentively to what Callaghan had to say. When the detective had finished talking, Willhaven smoked silently for a few seconds. Then he said:

"What you have to say interests me very much, Mr. Callaghan. And I appreciate your explanation as to why Lord Priorton should have employed you to try and settle this matter."

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Callaghan said: "Let's not become confused about the issues at stake, Mr. Willhaven. The position, to my mind, is quite simple."

Willhaven raised his eyebrows. "Is it?" he queried.

Callaghan said: "To my mind, yes. A settlement was arrived at when this poker game was over—a general settlement. On this general settlement your son had to pay three thousand five hundred pounds to Lord Priorton. Quite obviously, when he left that house he intended to pay that debt. The proof of that is that he asked you for the money. The fact that *you* thought he owed it is proved by you having given him the money to put into his bank so that he could send a cheque to Lord Priorton." Callaghan grinned. "After that, of course," he said, "there's a snag."

Willhaven smiled. He thought that Callaghan's grin was infectious.

"The snag being that I told Eustace to stop the cheque. Perhaps you can tell me something about that too, Mr. Callaghan," he suggested.

Callaghan said: "I think I can. To my mind there is only one reason why you should have done that. There *could* only be one reason; that is that one of the other people who took part in that game besides Lord Priorton and your son have influenced you to have the payment of that cheque stopped. Lord Priorton *wanted* to receive the money. You *intended* it should be paid. Something made you alter your mind. My guess is, it was one of those two other people, and I'm going to find out. Either you tell me or I'll find some means of making them talk."

Willhaven said: "They might not *want* to talk, Mr. Callaghan."

Callaghan said: "Whenever I want somebody to talk I find a means of making 'em talk." He grinned. "You'd be surprised," he said.

Willhaven said: "I probably shouldn't be. But I'll save them the inconvenience. You're quite right in your supposition, because one of the other parties who took part in that game gave me some information which merited the payment being stopped."

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Callaghan said: "One of the other parties? That would be Mr. Vandeler or Mrs. Vazeley."

"Exactly," said Willhaven. "Mrs. Vazeley wrote me a note and informed me that in her opinion the game had been crooked from start to finish."

Callaghan said: "Do you know Mrs. Vazeley well?"

Willhaven shook his head. "Not *very* well," he said. "I've met her."

Callaghan nodded. "You were prepared to accept this accusation from a woman who is merely an acquaintance, against the reputation of a man—Lord Priorton—whom you've known for years?"

Willhaven said: "The point doesn't arise, Mr. Callaghan. She was able to prove what she said!"

Mrs. Vazeley was a delightful woman of about thirty-eight. Her clothes were simple but marvellous. She had *chic* and an extraordinary allure. Callaghan thought he could fall for Mrs. Vazeley very easily. He said:

"You know, Mrs. Vazeley, you're in rather a jam."

She said airily: "Am I, Mr. Callaghan? How exciting! My life is so uneventful that the idea of being in a jam almost appeals to me. Another thing, I ought to tell you that I'm absolutely *thrilled* at meeting a private detective. Please have a cigarette. And would you like a drink?"

Callaghan said he would. Whilst he was drinking the brandy and soda, she said:

"Do tell me about the jam I'm in. I think I ought to know, don't you?"

Callaghan said: "You wrote a note to Hubert Willhaven, and you afterwards talked to him, either personally or on the telephone, and told him that the poker game at Lord Priorton's house was crooked. Quite obviously, as Willhaven told his son to stop payment of the cheque after that conversation with you, the suggestion was that Lord Priorton was the crook. Have you ever heard of the law of libel and slander, Mrs. Vazeley? If you can't prove that Lord Priorton was responsible for that game being crooked you will be in a jam, and it might cost you a lot of money."

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She said: "I know. I knew that when I told Mr. Willhaven. But what else could I do? You see I *knew* that game was crooked, Mr. Callaghan."

Callaghan said: "May I know how you knew?"

She said: "It's fearfully simple. *I* had no reason to complain about the game. I won about fifty pounds. I won fifty pounds from Mr. Vandeler, and he settled that in bank-notes before the general settlement was made between the others. So you'll agree that I've no cause for complaint."

Callaghan said: "That's agreed. But how can you prove that that game was crooked and that Priorton was responsible?"

She said: "I'll tell you. I was rather elated at winning fifty pounds, and when the game broke up I left my cigarette case behind. It's rather a valuable case. I'd left it on a little table by the side of my chair whilst I was playing. Next morning I had a very early appointment to leave London for Bangor on a train at seven-twenty, and I thought that on my way to the station I'd call in at Lord Priorton's house—I thought that possibly the servants would be up—and get my cigarette case. When I arrived at the house, the boot-boy let me in. I told him what I wanted and he said he'd go and look for my cigarette case. He seemed a rather stupid boy, so I told him not to bother but to go on with his work and I'd go and get the cigarette case because I knew exactly where it was. So I went up to the room on the first floor where we'd played, and there was my cigarette case. I picked it up. The card table was just as we'd left it the night before with the cards still lying on the table.

"The early morning sunlight was coming through the windows. It reflected on the glazed backs of the cards, and I saw something that gave me rather a shock."

Callaghan asked: "What did you see?"

"Every one of those cards was marked," said Mrs. Vazeley. "They'd been beautifully marked—cleverly marked—with a pin. Once you knew where to look you could see the little tiny pin-points, and if you were dealing you could tell the value of the card by the touch. Needless to say I was shocked. But I wanted to make quite certain. I examined all the cards. They

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were all marked. I took three or four of them and I showed them to Mr. Willhaven when I talked to him about it. If that isn't proof, what is?"

Callaghan said: "It looks as if there isn't a great deal of argument." He picked up his hat. "I'm afraid you won't have to worry about that action for slander."

She said: "No, I didn't think I should. Must you be going, Mr. Callaghan?"

Hubert Willhaven put down his newspaper as Callaghan was shown into the room. He said:

"Good morning, Mr. Callaghan. What can I do for you?"

Callaghan lit a cigarette. He said casually:

"I think the easiest thing for you to do, Willhaven, would be to give me a cheque for three thousand five hundred pounds, and we'll call this business quits."

Willhaven said: "You're being funny, aren't you? I'm not in a frame of mind for humour this morning."

Callaghan said: "I'm not being funny. Just listen to me for a moment. When I'm handling a case I never look for clues. I leave that to the detectives in fiction. Usually I'm only interested in people. If I can find that somebody in a case has done something that seems to me incongruous, I wonder why." Callaghan grinned. "It usually gets me somewhere," he said.

Willhaven said: "It would have to be a hell of an incongruity to get you three thousand five hundred pounds from me, Callaghan."

"I'll get it all right," said Callaghan. "Because it *was* a hell of an incongruity. Listen. I wondered why it was that Mrs. Vazeley had to telephone *you* and tell *you* that that game was crooked. Why didn't she telephone your son? She knows him. He's a man. He's thirty years of age. The obvious thing for her to have done was to have telephoned to *him*. She didn't do it."

Willhaven said: "I don't see the point."

"Of course you don't," said Callaghan. "I'll tell you what the point was. It was necessary for the success of your son's little plot that there should seem to be no connection between Mrs. Vazeley and himself. That's why she telephoned you."

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Willhaven said: "Are you suggesting that this is a put-up job between my son and Mrs. Vazeley?"

"I'm not suggesting anything. I'm *telling* you," said Callaghan. "Lord Priorton told me that you'd paid your son's gambling debts before. You're a rich man and you aren't going to have people saying that his debts of honour are unpaid. But quite obviously your son is often short of money—you keep him so because of his extravagance—otherwise he wouldn't have to go to you to pay money into his bank in order to give a cheque that would be met for a gambling debt." He grinned. "Not only has he been doing it on the people that he and Mrs. Vazeley have played cards with, but he's also been doing it on *you*."

Willhaven said: "I think you're talking nonsense. I still don't understand what you mean."

Callaghan said: "I'll tell you what I mean. Your son and Mrs. Vazeley went into that poker game at Lord Priorton's as partners. If they both won, it was going to be all right, but on this occasion Mrs. Vazeley won fifty pounds, and your son dropped three thousand five hundred. So Mrs. Vazeley leaves her cigarette case behind. The next morning, before anybody's up, she goes round to the house, rings the bell and asks for her cigarette case. She says she knows where she's left it. She probably tells the boot-boy to get on with his business and not bother to take her upstairs. While she was up there she very quickly marked the cards with a pin. That was easy. She's used to doing it, and it would take her five or six minutes. Then she went off, taking four or five of the cards with her. She rang you up. She knew you'd tell your son; that he'd stop the cheque. And she also knew, as *he* knew, that you wouldn't ask him to return the three thousand five hundred pounds. Get it?"

Willhaven said: "I see. You might be wrong, mightn't you?"

Callaghan said: "I *might* be. But unfortunately for herself Mrs. Vazeley told me that she got up early that morning in order to catch a train for Bangor in North Wales—the seven-twenty. Well, there wasn't a seven-twenty. That substantiates it a little bit, doesn't it?"

Willhaven nodded.

## INDOOR SPORTS

"The other thing is this," said Callaghan, "I understand from Lord Priorton that the last person to shuffle and deal the cards was your son. Therefore his thumb-prints should have been superimposed on practically every card in the pack. But that wasn't so. The most recent thumb-prints on every card in the pack were Mrs. Vazeley's." Callaghan grinned. "I think that clinches it, don't you?" he said.

Willhaven said: "I'm not going to argue. Anyway, I'll give you the cheque."

He went to the desk, got his cheque book.

Lord Priorton handed Callaghan a large whisky and soda. He said:

"Very nice work, Mr. Callaghan. I shall be delighted to pay you your fee. I congratulate you on your brilliant idea of checking the finger-prints on the back of the cards. I didn't know you had done that. That really was first class."

Callaghan said: "You can save your congratulations. I didn't check *any* finger-prints on *any* cards. I had a hunch and I played it."

# PING-PONG

BY

GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND

*from All-Story Weekly, September 28, 1918*

T. ASHLEY SOLVES A PING-PONG MYSTERY

*The only other work of detective fiction in which the popular sport of ping-pong plays an important role in the crime is a radio drama called The Adventure of the Swiss Nutcracker, solved by detective Ellery Queen with the aid of Nikki Porter, his secretary, Inspector Queen, his father, and Sergeant Velie, the Inspector's aide. It has not, however, been published in book form.*

THE coroner's inquest seemed hardly more than a matter of routine. So obvious was the fact that Douglas Powell, the eccentric retired cotton broker, had fallen to his death from one of his library windows on the third floor of his house on West Heights Boulevard that Coroner Drummond would undoubtedly have omitted even the formality of a finding in the matter, had not the law rendered it mandatory.

Assembled in the back room of McCabe's Undertaking Parlours, whither the body had been removed—for Mr. Powell was without relatives and Drummond had so ordered—the little gathering spoke in tones as subdued as the dim light from the frosted bulb overhead. The presence of death, weighing upon them all, muted and constrained the spirit of life.

"It seems quite obvious", judged Drummond, joining the tips of his thin fingers and squinting through his glasses, "that the deceased came to his death through accidental means. His library window was open. The fragment of woollen cloth caught on the blind cord corresponds to the fabric of the coat he wore last night. His body, as you have heard from Mr. Shannigan, the milkman, and from Mrs. Estill, the house-keeper, was discovered at 6.15 this morning lying in the soft earth of the flower-bed under the window. Mulvey, here," and



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he gestured at the officer who, helmet in hand, stood very ill at ease beside the chair in which the coroner was seated, "has given us a very lucid statement of the manner in which Mrs. Estill summoned him, and of how he let the body remain where it was until my arrival. The evidence is self-explanatory and conclusive. If no further facts are forthcoming, I shall render a verdict of accidental death."

For a moment nobody moved or spoke. Drummond's eyes sought the witnesses, one by one—the housekeeper, pale, tight-lipped, and wary; Shannigan, who knew not where to put his hands and feet; the self-sufficient Mulvey; Dr. Edwin Graun, Powell's long-time friend and physician; and last of all Dr. Jamison Herrick, the police surgeon.

"Well, gentlemen," said he, "are there any further remarks to be made? If not, I will render my verdict."

The little pause that followed seemed to indicate unanimity of opinion. But before Drummond could take his fountain pen from his pocket, Dr. Herrick spoke up.

"Just a minute," said he, passing a hand over his bald head, as he sat there across the table from the coroner. "Before you make out the certificate, we should be positive of all the factors involved in this matter. I am still not quite satisfied that Mr. Powell's death was caused by the cranial fracture obviously due to his head striking that white-washed boulder at the edge of the flower-bed."

"You mean there may have been a fracture of the cervical vertebrae, as well?" inquired Graun. "If so, a little further examination will establish that fact. That, or the shock, may have killed him. This, however, is immaterial. The mere details do not matter. Whatever they may be, the prime factor remains that it was the fall which produced death. Am I not right?"

His full-fleshed, rubicund face assumed an inquiring expression. He twirled the little gold cigar cutter at the end of his watch chain, and looked from face to face. All met his gaze save Mrs. Estill. Her eyes, lowered and blinking, seemed studying the carpet as if mightily interested in the dull, obscure pattern there.

"Well, am I right, gentlemen, or not?" repeated he.

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"I hardly know," answered the police surgeon. "What strikes me as peculiar is that the scalp wound shows no sign of bleeding, or at least none commensurate with the injury involved. In fact, the appearance of the wound—if I didn't feel so positive, myself, that the fall caused his death—would suggest to me the idea that Mr. Powell had already been dead for some time before having fallen from the window."

"What's that?" demanded Dr. Graun. "I don't quite follow you. How could he have been dead *before* he fell?"

"That is the puzzling factor in the case," replied Dr. HerRick. "Until we get it cleared up, I think we ought not to go ahead with the verdict."

Dr. Graun's eyes blinked with a thoughtful expression. For a moment he ceased spinning his cigar cutter. Then, while Drummond peered inquiringly at him, and Mrs. Estill's lips moved as if she were mechanically counting the number of pattern repetitions in the carpet, he said:

"In view of the fact that I spent the evening with Mr. Powell last night, and that I left him at 11.30, in his usual health and spirits, I confess I'm at a loss to understand just how it all happened. Mrs. Estill heard us talking and playing ping-pong—his favourite game, gentlemen, barring chess—up to the time I left. She herself let me out, and chained and locked the front door after me, as she has just now testified. After that, she claims she went directly to bed, although of course there can be no witness to that fact.

"Mr. Powell was alive at 11.30. That much we know. The house shows no signs of having been entered. There are no traces of murder. Death must have been caused by the fall. That much we can be sure of by a process of elimination. No other hypothesis will fit the facts. Do any of you gentlemen see any other explanation?"

"I don't for one," answered the police surgeon, frowning. "That's what puzzles me so. Because even that won't hold water. If the fall caused Mr. Powell's death, how the devil does it happen that he didn't bleed freely from the wound on the head?"

For a moment Graun pondered. Then, looking up, he answered:

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"There's just one possible hypothesis that may fit the facts."

"And what is that?" demanded Herrick.

"Powell may have suffered an attack of heart failure while leaning out of the window——"

"In which case there would undoubtedly have been more bleeding."

"Not necessarily," put in the coroner. "Circulation would have already stopped. I think, on the whole, that's the best explanation we can give. In the circumstances, I'll change my finding to death from natural causes or accident."

He reached for his pen, opened the death certificate on the table before him, and was about to begin filling it in when Herrick stayed his hand with the remark:

"Hold on a minute, please, if you don't mind. Mrs. Estill, after Dr. Graun left, did you hear any sound that might have been caused by anybody entering Mr. Powell's library or bedroom? Did anything happen that in any way suggested trouble or violence of any kind?"

"No, sir," the housekeeper answered with an oblique and nervous look, bobbing her little jet-trimmed bonnet. "Not a thing, sir."

"Hear any footsteps, or anything of that kind?"

"In the library, sir? Nothing. That thick carpet deafens everything. It's extra thick, sir."

Frowning, the police surgeon fixed critical eyes on her.

"Now see here," he said. "Tell me just what you did hear last night, if anything."

"Well, sir, all I heard was the doctor, here, and Mr. Powell playing their game and talking, until about half-past eleven. First he'd say something and then the doctor would answer. I could hear the little ping-pong ball go *tack-tack-tack* on the library table. And then maybe it would fall to the floor."

"How did you know that, Mrs. Estill?"

"Why—there'd come a little pause in the game, and then it would go on again. Mr. Powell was wonderful fond of that game, God rest him! The kindest man and the best that ever——"

"What else did you hear?" interrupted the surgeon, dryly, while the coroner and Dr. Graun studied the woman with

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close attention. The housekeeper dabbed at her eyes with a moist handkerchief, gave a shrewd look at her inquisitor, and continued:

"At half-past eleven I heard them say good-night, and the doctor went away. After that, everything was quiet, same as usual."

"Did you enter the library, or see Mr. Powell alive, after that time?"

"No, sir. He was always very particular about not being disturbed at night. That was his reading time. He was the best man in the world, sir, and always treated me like a lady, though he was odd in his ways. And I shall miss him——"

"That will do," interrupted Herrick, in no mood to listen to discursions regarding the character of the deceased. He bent his gaze on the coroner, seeming to peer through him at vacancy beyond. "This is most peculiar. Direct testimony exists, from two witnesses, that Mr. Powell was alive at 11.30, and yet the condition of the body certainly points to the fact that he was dead at that time. Dr. Graun, will you kindly give us a few additional details of your call on him, last night?"

"Certainly, with the greatest pleasure," answered Graun, still whirling his cigar cutter. "In fact, I'll go over the whole matter again. I arrived about nine—one of my weekly routine calls, such as I've been making for the past eight or ten months. I found him in his usual state of health, barring a noticeable increase in the mitral insufficiency that had been gaining on him, little by little, since last summer; nothing serious, however—nothing that would warrant me in the belief that he was going to be stricken with heart failure so soon."

"It's odd about heart cases, that way," put in Herrick. "You think a man—say with a leaky valve, or whatnot—might live for a year or two, or five; and he drops dead almost at once. Another man you wouldn't give a week to live—everything all shot to pieces—and he survives to bury you. During your call last night, Dr. Graun, did you make a stethoscopic examination?"

"I did, as usual," Graun answered, nodding. "Mr. Powell, of course, was something of a hypochondriac. If it were not for the old rule of *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*—nothing but good

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about the dead—I suppose I'd have to call him a particularly fussy crank. For the last three years he has never eaten a bite that he hasn't weighed in a little pair of scales. Half his time and attention have been given to proteids, calories, enzymes, Bulgarian milk cultures and all that sort of thing. Nobody but a crank would be so interested in a childish game like ping-pong at his age. Every time I called he insisted on playing a game. A good patient; I couldn't refuse—though Lord! how it bored me! You know the type, Herrick, don't you?"

"Yes, I know; but never mind about that, now. You say his condition wasn't such last night as to warrant any presumption of immediate danger?"

"Not that I could see," answered Graun, while Drummond listened with close attention and the others watched him anxiously—all save Mrs. Estill, who had once more gone back to counting the patterns in the carpet, as if to keep from hearing all those interrogatory questions.

"The only supposition that seems to meet the case is that, after I left him, he must have opened the window to get a breath of fresh air. We'd both been smoking, and the air was somewhat vitiated. He probably took several long breaths, had a syncope—as sometimes happens when an excess of oxygen suddenly enters the blood—fell forward and slid over the sill. That's the only hypothesis I can think of that fits all the known facts."

A little silence followed, during which the police surgeon rose, clasped his hands behind his back, and began slowly to pace up and down the dim-lit room. Graun continued to whirl the trinket on his watch chain. Suddenly Drummond, the coroner, spoke again.

"Mrs. Estill," he asked, "how did you know it was 11.30 when the doctor left?"

"The hall clock struck the half-hour, sir, just after I heard the street door close."

"Did you hear the library window open, at any time during the evening?"

The housekeeper pondered a moment, then nodded affirmation.

"Yes, sir, I did."

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"At what time, please?"

"I can't just say, sir, but I think it was while they were playing their game."

"Did you hear it shut again?"

"No, sir."

"Are you sure this was during the course of the game?"

"No, sir, not just exactly sure, but I think so. Still, it may have been afterwards. I don't remember."

"Surely, it must have been afterwards," put in Dr. Graun. "I recall very distinctly that the air was close and smoky—recall thinking in a casual way that it would be a good thing to have a little fresh air, but didn't suggest it. That was while we were talking, before we'd started the routine game—the game, I'll confess, that my willingness to play helped me to retain Mr. Powell as a patient. Then something else diverted my mind. To my personal knowledge, the window was not opened during my call."

The coroner pondered a moment, while Herrick stopped his pacing, then put his pen to the certificate of death.

"I think, gentlemen," said he, "that we have heard enough. The case is conclusive and self-evident. Any further investigation would be a needless waste of time and energy. I shall give a finding of death by natural causes or accidental means."

While the others watched him with mute interest, a little inflated by the instinctive sense of dignity we all feel when taking part in official proceedings, Drummond filled in the blank, dried it with a blotter and put it in his pocket. He reached for his hat, on the table before him, and stood up.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said he. "I'm glad the case is so obvious—glad there are no painful or embarrassing complications. Thank you, Mrs. Estill. Good day."

Dr. Herrick likewise took his hat. The coroner, the surgeon, and the policeman departed with Shannigan, the milkman, leaving Dr. Graun with the housekeeper and McCabe, to talk over some further details. Out on the pavement, in the cheerful March sunshine once more, the little group broke up, Herrick touched his hat, gave the coroner a brief good-day and, turning on his heel, departed with his hands thrust far into his overcoat pockets and his deep eyes smouldering.

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"A wound that didn't bleed," he murmured, "and a doubt concerning the time of a window being opened. H—m!"

Downtown walked Dr. Herrick, with the air of a man sunk in deep abstraction. Arriving at the Arcade Building, he took the elevator to the eleventh floor, and entered an office, the door of which bore the name:

T. H. ASHLEY  
INVESTIGATIONS

Then, giving his hand to the sharp-faced man who rose to greet him, he asked:

"What's the news, Tom? Busy?"

Ashley was, and said so. Herrick continued:

"I've got a case for you. Something urgent. It's a sticker with beautiful possibilities. If you can unravel it I'll get you a berth in the secret service. Here's a chance for you to win your spurs."

"What's the idea?" demanded Ashley. "Sit down, and let's have the facts."

Herrick told him all he knew. Ashley listened with close attention, especially when Herrick gave the housekeeper's testimony that the ping-pong game had lasted up to the time of Dr. Graun's departure.

"That lets Graun out," said he. "In other circumstances, since he was the last man to see Powell alive, some suspicion might attach to him."

"It certainly would," assented Herrick. "But his testimony absolutely coincides with hers. He goes clear. If nobody else entered that house, later, we have only two hypotheses—either the housekeeper murdered Powell, or he died a natural death. You must find out whether or not she would have any motive. Have a look at her and at the premises, and see what you make of it. I rather think the old lady hasn't told all she knows. She was a bit uncertain about the time of that window being opened. Another thing, when I first saw her at the house, and she gave her version of being notified of the accident by Shanigan, the milkman, I thought her grief was just a shade

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exaggerated. Now you know the principal facts. It's up to you. Get busy."

Ashley put a few questions to the doctor, squinting with narrowed eyes as he tilted back in his chair, hands deep in trouser pockets. Then, nodding, he answered:

"All right, I'm on. Where shall I see you?"

"Headquarters, all morning."

"Good! I'm not promising anything, of course, but if there's any thread to pick up, I'll do my best to find it."

Within half an hour he was examining Powell's library, while Mrs. Estill, anxious and pale, stood with hands tightly clasped and nervously watched his investigation.

First he took a general survey of the room, then peered down from the window out of which Powell had fallen. With a large magnifying glass he examined the sill. At different angles he studied the thick-piled carpet from the table to the window.

Next he drew down the window blinds, switched on the electric light of the table, and inspected the table itself—a large oak table, still cleared of books and papers as it had been for the game. Finally he asked for the ping-pong set.

Silently Mrs. Estill brought it. A certain unwillingness was now manifest in her attitude; an uneasy suspicion of this abrupt, laconic individual intruding on the privacy of the house of death.

"Here's the things, sir," said she, putting the box on the table. "Everything's just as it was left last night."

"Did Mr. Powell always put the bats and balls in the box, this way, after playing?" demanded Ashley.

"Why—not always."

"Did he ever put them back?"

"Sometimes."

"What share of this property is coming to you now? This house and land?"

The woman's face twitched slightly.

"I—I don't know, sir. How can I know, till the will is read?"

"Ah, of course you can't," said Ashley. "Pardon my asking.



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I needn't detain you any longer. Please be good enough to leave."

Troubled, she obeyed him. When she was gone, Ashley took from his vest pocket a jeweller's *loupe*, screwed it into his eye, and carrying the two little ping-pong bats over to the window, raised the blinds.

By the clear light of the winter's day he spent several minutes closely studying the handles of the bats. From time to time he grunted, but what the significance of those grunts might be was betrayed by no remark.

This observation finished, he replaced the bats in the box, removed the *loupe* from his eye, and began pacing the heavily carpeted floor. As he walked, he keenly studied the carpet. He moved the table to one side, so that the light from the incandescents should fall unimpeded over the whole expanse of carpeting.

For a minute or two he seemed to discover nothing; but suddenly he stooped, peered down with close attention, and then, kneeling, began to poke with an inquisitive forefinger at the thick velvet-like fabric.

Carefully he extracted something from its tufts, looked at it a moment as he held it between his fingers, then laid it in his palm and once more put the magnifying glass to his eye. With the greatest minuteness he studied the object, through his lens. It was a tiny, curved fragment of thin glass.

"Glass!" he said, frowning. "H—m! Glass!"

He took from another pocket a small pasteboard box which, when opened, proved to be full of cotton wool. Into the cotton wool he dropped the shard of glass; he closed the box with care, and pocketed it again. Then he got down on his knees by the place where the table had stood, and with his reading glass meticulously examined the place where he had found the shard.

"More glass—powdered! This looks interesting!"

For about five minutes he studied the place. Then, his investigation seemingly at an end, he got up and summoned Mrs. Estill.

"Tell me," he asked, "how long ago was an electric-light bulb broken here?"

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"Broken, sir? Why—I don't know. I don't remember that one was ever broken in this room. There was one in the hall last week, but——"

"You're quite positive no bulb was ever smashed in the library?"

"Yes, sir. Why?"

"All right, Mrs. Estill. Thank you very much indeed for your kindness. Good day!"

Leaving her very pale and anxious, he took his departure, with the box containing the ping-pong set. By the grim smile on his lips, one might have suspected that his errand at the house of Powell had not been entirely in vain.

Straight back to his office he proceeded, entered his little laboratory which led out of it, and spent about twenty minutes there. Then he rang up Dr. Herrick at police headquarters.

"Doctor," said he, "I have a little fresh evidence in the case that will require some expert medical testimony."

"Fine!" answered Herrick. "Come along down!"

"All right. But I think I'll need more than a single opinion on the matter. Please have Dr. Graun there, too. He knows so much about Mr. Powell's habits that he can give us a great deal of valuable information."

"O.K. I'll have him here by the time you arrive. Got some evidence, have you?"

"I don't know. That depends on what you and Graun say about the indications."

Dr. Graun was already in Herrick's office when Ashley arrived. Graun shook hands with the investigator, and then—sitting down beside the desk—inquired with a smile:

"Well, Mr. Ashley, have you any further light to shed on the mystery?"

"That depends," answered Ashley, opening the ping-pong box. He laid the box on the desk, took out the bats and—while Graun and Herrick watched him with interest—held them up to view.

"First," said he, "I have discovered the curious fact that

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both of these handles show the same type of fingerprints. Perspiring fingers, of course, leave very definite marks."

"What?" asked Dr. Graun, scowling a little. "What has that got to do with the case?"

"The hands of one and the same individual were last in contact with both these bats," Ashley explained. "The texture of the skin as shown by the prints on both is unmistakably the same. In other words, for some reason or other, after the game was finished, either Mr. Powell or you, Doctor, must have held both bats for some time."

"Very likely," answered Graun, nodding. "If I remember rightly, I believe I myself put both bats back in the box. But what bearing can that possibly have on the manner in which Mr. Powell met his death?"

"The hand prints do not indicate a hasty or casual touch," said Ashley. "In fact, both bats seem to have been held for some considerable time by the same person. This is certainly very puzzling. Can you explain it?"

Graun pondered a moment, then shook his head in negation.

"Well, no," he answered. "Perhaps you are mistaken."

Ashley smiled noncommittally, laid the bats down, and produced the little box of cotton wool. This he also opened. From it he shook out a piece of broken glass upon the desk, and pointing to it said:

"Here, gentlemen, is a bit of very thin, curved glass, which I discovered on the carpet near the table."

"Glass, eh?" queried Herrick. "Well, where does that fit in?"

"There were also signs that a little powdered glass had been brushed up from the thick carpet," Ashley continued, as he stood by the desk and looked at both the other men seated. "The carpet had certainly been brushed. My inference is that somebody stepped on some pieces of thin glass there, and then brushed them up, but was unable to get all the powder up and also overlooked this little piece here."

"What possible bearing can that have?" put in Graun, puzzled.

"I don't know yet. Mrs. Estill informed me that she broke an electric-light bulb in the library, two or three days ago. Probably this glass, here, is a fragment of that bulb."

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"Undoubtedly so," assented Graun. He picked up the bit of glass and carefully examined it. "The curve and the thinness strongly suggest such an explanation. Yes, that's what this must have been—part of a bulb. As such, it can't have any possible significance in this case."

Casually he tossed it in his palm, two or three times, then dropped it into the wastebasket. Ashley picked it out again, without comment, and once more deposited it carefully in the cotton wool.

"Mrs. Estill", said he, "showed some signs of perturbation when I showed it to her. I also asked her whether Mr. Powell ever used perfume of any kind. She rather evaded the question. Perfume, of course, often comes in thin vials. This glass, instead of being part of a bulb, may have been part of a vial."

"Yes, that's so, too," put in Graun, while the police surgeon, looking from one to the other, and obviously understanding little of what was forward, drummed on the polished surface of the desk with his nails.

"Well, what about all this, anyhow?" demanded he. "I don't see that we're getting anywhere, Ashley, or that your 'new evidence' is worth the powder to blow it."

Ashley smiled dryly as he made answer.

"The one fact that destroys both possibilities of an incandescent light or a vial of perfume is that my laboratory tests give conclusive evidence that this glass has been in contact with a very highly poisonous substance."

"What's that you say?" demanded Herrick, sharply, while Graun stared in astonishment. "What kind of substance? Some liquid?"

"No, a gas. I tested it carefully, before coming here, and discovered that it had been exposed to  $\text{CO}_2$  gas. Carbon dioxide, you know."

"Carbon dioxide?" repeated Herrick. "Are you sure?"

"Positive! As both you gentlemen know, it is a violent and fatal poison. When inhaled in any quantity, as, for example, from a vial, it produces a spasm of the glottis and immediate death."

Dr. Graun peered from beneath wrinkled brows at Ashley. Some understanding of the matter now seemed to have dawned on him.

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"Extraordinary!" murmured he. "This gives the case a new and decidedly sinister appearance. As things are shaping now, a good working hypothesis might be formed that after my departure last night somebody—under the pretence of having Mr. Powell smell a vial said to contain some pleasing odour—caused him to inhale  $\text{CO}_2$ . This, of course, would be premeditated murder. Murder in the first degree."

There came a little silence in the office, for perhaps the space of half a dozen heartbeats. Then, asked Herrick:

"Would Mrs. Estill have had any motive?"

"Gentlemen," answered Graun, reluctantly, but with the air of a man doing his duty, "there is one fact which I assume you have not been aware of, but which it is imperative for you to know. Do not misunderstand me as bringing any accusation, but merely take the fact for what it is worth, in connection with the others."

"What fact, Doctor?" asked Herrick anxiously.

"This: that as a friend of some years' standing, Mr. Powell several times informed me that he intended to recompense the housekeeper for many years of faithful service by leaving her a half interest in the estate—a matter, probably, of some sixty thousand dollars."

"Ah, indeed," said the police surgeon. "This is getting interesting. I wish we'd had these facts at the inquest. Now we *are* coming on. Lord, what a wonderful proposition science is! So then, you say the old lady was to get half the estate?"

"Correct," answered Graun, nodding.

"And the other half was to go to——"

"That I don't know. He never told me."

"All right," said Herrick. "It looks as if Mrs. Estill was guilty, doesn't it? Now then, assuming that she really did do this murder, where the devil could she have got the knowledge or the means to carry it out? Would you judge that her intelligence was sufficient for such an undertaking?"

"Why, as for that," put in Ashley, "from even the little conversation I had with her, I analysed her as a shrewd, canny woman. The matter seems to be clarifying itself, doesn't it?"

"I should say so!" ejaculated Herrick, while Dr. Graun sat pondering, with half-closed eyes. Suddenly Graun spoke.

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"With even these few data in hand," said he, "I think we can make a beginning towards a reconstruction of the crime."

"More than a beginning," supplemented Ashley. From the ping-pong box he took out the bats again, and with them the little celluloid balls. Taking a bat in each hand, he stood there looking at the police surgeon.

"You are familiar with this game, Dr. Herrick?" asked he.

"Well, yes," Herrick answered. "I played it a few times, years ago, when it was all the rage."

"Very good! Now please close your eyes and listen."

Puzzled, Herrick obeyed. Ashley dropped a ball on to the hard surface of the desk. As it bounded, he struck it lightly with his right-hand bat. At the next rebound he hit it back again with the left. To and fro he bounced it, varying the rhythm of the strokes a little.

*Tick-tack, tick-tack, tick-tack* went the ball.

"Tell me, Dr. Herrick," said Ashley, "as you sit there, without seeing what I am doing, could you by any possibility determine that one man is playing this game, and not two? Listen acutely and let me have your judgment."

Herrick gave the problem his acute attention, while Graun bent forward with obvious interest and wonderingly observed the little bouncing sphere of celluloid.

"Well?" questioned Ashley. "What do you say?"

Herrick opened his eyes and looked up questioningly at the investigator, who now stopped batting the ball and replaced it, with both bats, in the box.

"Bless my soul, but that's a curious deception!" he commented. "I could have sworn two men were playing!"

"So far, so good," smiled Ashley. "Remember, Doctor, the finger prints on the bats indicate that they were both held for some time by one and the same individual."

"I don't see just what you're driving at," interpolated Graun, not seeming to understand at all.

"Ah, but you will in a minute," Ashley assured him. "Suppose we reconstruct the case, something like this. Follow me closely. Suppose that some person as yet unidentified, somebody with an interest in Mr. Powell's death, gave him a vial

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of CO<sub>2</sub> last night to smell. Mr. Powell died immediately, dropping the vial from his hand.

"His fall was undoubtedly eased to the floor by the person who murdered him, this person having, of course, been on the watch for just such a contingency. Then the murderer evidently brushed up the bits of broken and powdered glass, but couldn't quite get up all the powder, and also overlooked one tiny bit of glass—the one fragment which I now have in my box of cotton wool."

"Very ingenious," said the police surgeon, "but would any such bizarre explanation hold water?"

"Wait till I have done," answered the investigator, smiling again. "The murderer proceeded to continue the ping-pong game and to carry on a pretence of conversation, altering his voice to imitate Mr. Powell's. At some time, not determinable, he dragged the body to the window. The marks on the carpet amply prove that fact. He opened the window, slid the body over the sill, and let it drop into the soft earth of the flower-bed."

"All these suppositions, joined to the fact that Mr. Powell's wound did not bleed and that the body gave some evidence that death had occurred previous to 11.30 last night, open up the way to some very entertaining speculations, do they not?"

Questioningly his eyes sought those of Dr. Graun, who sat there looking at him with the same studious gaze as from the beginning of the conference. Herrick's eyes, too, drawn by a strange and dawning wonder, fixed themselves on Graun.

"Doctor," asked he in a tense voice, "what have you got to say about all this?"

"Pardon me," answered Graun, "but I think I'll just light a cigar."

Speaking, he drew from his waistcoat pocket a thin black Havana.

"Please excuse me for not offering you gentlemen a smoke also," said he with perfect calm, "but this is the only one I happen to have. It's rather choice, too—something I have cured according to my own particular formula."

He struck a match, lit the cigar and took three or four long pulls at it, each of which he inhaled deeply into his lungs and then blew forth into thin vapour.

## PING-PONG

"Very choice indeed," he remarked. "Highly valuable as an aid in answering difficult questions."

His mouth sagged a little as he spoke, and a peculiar, glassy look came into his narrowed eyes.

"Just one or two things more, gentlemen," said he. "The will left by Mr. Powell names a certain Frank Blaisdell as the joint heir with Mrs. Estill. Mr. Blaisdell was to turn over 75 per cent of the proceeds to me. He is in no way involved—a mere dummy I assure you. I state this to protect a weak, though an innocent man."

"Good God! What are you saying?" ejaculated Herrick, starting up. Graun raised a quivering hand.

"Sit down," he commanded, speaking thickly now and swaying a little in his chair. "Silence, and listen to me! I have a wife and two children. They deserve your consideration. Don't forget that!"

Over his face a greyish hue was drawing, like a mask. The muscles of his lips were twitching, but he controlled them with a supreme effort.

"Let—let the verdict for Powell stand," said Graun in a strange voice. "And write the same for me—heart failure. Then Katherine and the children need never know. This cigar—wonderful, isn't it? The name of the drug in it is—but never mind . . ."

The last words came in hardly more than a whisper. Suddenly Graun slumped forward; his head dropped on his breast. He shuddered slightly and was still.

"For God's sake!" whispered Herrick, his voice tense as a wire. He shook Graun by the shoulder. The doctor's arm fell limp and dangled horribly.

Silence fell in the office.

All at once, turning to Ashley, the police surgeon gulped:

"What—what are we going to do? You've solved the case—you've won your spurs. If——"

"Spurs be damned!" retorted Ashley. "Think I'd worry about spurs *now*, with that wife and those children to be saved? Heart failure it is in both cases. Just let it go at that."



# A CHESS PROBLEM

BY

AGATHA CHRISTIE

*from the Big Four*

HERCULE POIROT CALLS "MATE!" IN A CHESS MYSTERY

*Agatha Christie, who specializes in the appropriate, has never selected an apter or happier theme to exercise the "little grey cells" of her bustling little Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot, than the game involved in A Chess Problem. Other detective stories about chess which are obscure, interesting, or otherwise noteworthy are: Raymund Allen's A Happy Solution (from Strand Magazine, 1916); Marten Cumberland's Mate in Three Moves, about detective Loreto Santos; and Percival Wilde's Slippery Elm, from Rogues in Clover, about detective Bill Parmelee.*

Poirot and I often dined at a small restaurant in Soho. We were there one evening, when we observed a friend at an adjacent table. It was Inspector Japp, and as there was room at our table, he came and joined us. It was some time since either of us had seen him.

"Never do you drop in to see us nowadays," declared Poirot reproachfully. "Not since the affair of the Yellow Jasmine have we met, and that is nearly a month ago."

"I've been up north—that's why. Take any interest in chess, Moosior Poirot?" Japp asked.

"I have played it, yes."

"Did you see that curious business yesterday? Match between two players of worldwide reputation, and one died during the game?"

"I saw a mention of it. Dr. Savaronoff, the Russian champion, was one of the players, and the other, who succumbed to heart failure, was the brilliant young American, Gilmour Wilson."

"Quite right. Savaronoff beat Rubinstein and became

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Russian champion some years ago. Wilson is said to be a second Capablanca."

"A very curious occurrence," mused Poirot. "If I mistake not, you have a particular interest in the matter?"

Japp gave a rather embarrassed laugh.

"You've hit it, Moosior Poirot. I'm puzzled. Wilson was sound as a bell—no trace of heart trouble. His death is quite inexplicable."

"You suspect Dr. Savaronoff of putting him out of the way?" I cried.

"Hardly that," said Japp dryly. "I don't think even a Russian would murder another man in order not to be beaten at chess—and anyway, from all I can make out, the boot was likely to be on the other leg. The doctor is supposed to be very hot stuff—second to Lasker they say he is."

Poirot nodded thoughtfully.

"Then what exactly is your little idea?" he asked. "Why should Wilson be poisoned? For I assume, of course, that it is poison you suspect."

"Naturally. Heart failure means your heart stops beating—that's all there is to that. That's what a doctor says officially at the moment, but privately he tips us the wink that he's not satisfied."

"When is the autopsy to take place?"

"To-night. Wilson's death was extraordinarily sudden. He seemed quite as usual and was actually moving one of the pieces when he suddenly fell forward—dead!"

"There are very few poisons would act in such a fashion," objected Poirot.

"I know. The autopsy will help us, I expect. But why should anyone want Gilmour Wilson out of the way—that's what I'd like to know. Harmless unassuming young fellow. Just come over here from the States, and apparently hadn't an enemy in the world."

"It seems incredible," I mused.

"Not at all," said Poirot, smiling. "Japp has his theory, I can see."

"I have, Moosior Poirot. I don't believe the poison was meant for Wilson—it was meant for the other man."

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"Savaronoff?"

"Yes. Savaronoff fell foul of the Bolsheviks at the outbreak of the Revolution. He was even reported killed. In reality he escaped, and for three years endured incredible hardships in the wilds of Siberia. His sufferings were so great that he is now a changed man. His friends and acquaintances declare they would hardly have recognized him. His hair is white, and his whole aspect that of a man terribly aged. He is a semi-invalid, and seldom goes out, living alone with a niece, Sonia Daviloff, and a Russian manservant in a flat down Westminster way. It is possible that he still considers himself a marked man. Certainly he was very unwilling to agree to this chess contest. He refused several times point blank, and it was only when the newspapers took it up and began making a fuss about the 'unsportsmanlike refusal' that he gave in. Gilmour Wilson had gone on challenging him with real Yankee pertinacity, and in the end he got his way. Now I ask you, Moosior Poirot, why wasn't he willing? Because he didn't want attention drawn to him. Didn't want somebody or other to get on his track. That's my solution—Gilmour Wilson got pipped by mistake."

"There is no one who has any private reason to gain by Savaronoff's death?"

"Well, his niece, I suppose. He's recently come into an immense fortune. Left him by Madame Gospoja whose husband was a sugar profiteer under the old regime. They had an affair together once, I believe, and she refused steadfastly to credit the reports of his death."

"Where did the match take place?"

"In Savaronoff's own flat. He's an invalid, as I told you."

"Many people there to watch it?"

"At least a dozen—probably more."

Poirot made an expressive grimace.

"My poor Japp, your task is not an easy one."

"Once I know definitely that Wilson was poisoned, I can get on."

"Has it occurred to you that, in the meantime, supposing your assumption that Savaronoff was the intended victim to be correct, the murderer may try again?"

"Of course it has. Two men are watching Savaronoff's flat."

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"That will be very useful if anyone should call with a bomb under his arm," said Poirot dryly.

"You're getting interested, Moosior Poirot," said Japp, with a twinkle. "Care to come round to the mortuary and see Wilson's body before the doctors start on it? Who knows, his tie-pin may be askew, and that may give you a valuable clue that will solve the mystery."

"My dear Japp, all through dinner my fingers have been itching to rearrange your own tie-pin. You permit, yes? Ah! that is much more pleasing to the eye. Yes, by all means, let us go to the mortuary."

I could see that Poirot's attention was completely captivated by this new problem. It was so long since he had shown any interest over any outside case that I was quite rejoiced to see him back in his old form.

For my own part, I felt a deep pity as I looked down upon the motionless form and convulsed face of the hapless young American who had come by his death in such a strange way. Poirot examined the body attentively. There was no mark on it anywhere, except a small scar on the left hand.

"And the doctor says that's a burn, not a cut," explained Japp.

Poirot's attention shifted to the contents of the dead man's pockets which a constable spread out for our inspection. There was nothing much—a handkerchief, keys, notecase filled with notes, and some unimportant letters. But one object standing by itself filled Poirot with interest.

"A chessman!" he exclaimed. "A white bishop. Was that in his pocket?"

"No, clasped in his hand. We had quite a difficulty to get it out of his fingers. It must be returned to Dr. Savaronoff some time. It's part of a very beautiful set of carved-ivory chessmen."

"Permit me to return it to him. It will make an excuse for my going there."

"Aha!" cried Japp. "So you want to come in on this case?"

"I admit it. So skilfully have you aroused my interest."

"That's fine. Got you away from your brooding. Captain Hastings is pleased, too, I can see."

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"Quite right," I said, laughing.

Poirot turned back towards the body.

"No other little detail you can tell me about—him?" he asked.

"I don't think so."

"Not even—that he was left-handed?"

"You're a wizard, Moosior Poirot. How did you know that? He *was* left-handed. Not that it's anything to do with the case."

"Nothing whatever," agreed Poirot hastily, seeing that Japp was slightly ruffled. "My little joke—that was all. I like to play you the trick, you see."

We went out upon an amicable understanding.

The following morning saw us wending our way to Dr. Savaronoff's flat in Westminster.

"Sonia Daviloff," I mused. "It's a pretty name."

Poirot stopped, and threw me a look of despair.

"Always looking for romance! You are incorrigible."

The door of the flat was opened to us by a manservant with a peculiarly wooden face. It seemed impossible to believe that that impassive countenance could ever display emotion.

Poirot presented a card on which Japp had scribbled a few words of introduction, and we were shown into a low, long room furnished with rich hangings and curios. One or two wonderful ikons hung upon the walls, and exquisite Persian rugs lay upon the floor. A samovar stood upon a table.

I was examining one of the ikons which I judged to be of considerable value, and turned to see Poirot prone upon the floor. Beautiful as the rug was, it hardly seemed to me to necessitate such close attention.

"Is it such a very wonderful specimen?" I asked.

"Eh? Oh! the rug? But no, it was not the rug I was remarking. But it is a beautiful specimen, far too beautiful to have a large nail wantonly driven through the middle of it. No, Hastings," as I came forward, "the nail is not there now. But the hole remains."

A sudden sound behind us made me spin round, and Poirot spring nimbly to his feet. A girl was standing in the doorway. Her eyes, full upon us, were dark with suspicion. She was of medium height, with a beautiful, rather sullen face, dark-blue

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eyes, and very black hair which was cut short. Her voice, when she spoke, was rich and sonorous, and completely un-English.

"I fear my uncle will be unable to see you. He is a great invalid."

"That is a pity, but perhaps you will kindly help me instead. You are Mademoiselle Daviloff, are you not?"

"Yes, I am Sonia Daviloff. What is it you want to know?"

"I am making some inquiries about that sad affair the night before last—the death of M. Gilmour Wilson. What can you tell me about it?"

The girl's eyes opened wide.

"He died of heart failure—as he was playing chess."

"The police are not so sure that it was—heart failure, Mademoiselle."

The girl gave a terrified gesture.

"It was true then," she cried. "Ivan was right."

"Who is Ivan, and why do you say he was right?"

"It was Ivan who opened the door to you—and he has already said to me that in his opinion Gilmour Wilson did not die a natural death—that he was poisoned by mistake."

"By mistake?"

"Yes, the poison was meant for my uncle."

She had quite forgotten her first distrust now, and was speaking eagerly.

"Why do you say that, Mademoiselle? Who should wish to poison Dr. Savaronoff?"

She shook her head.

"I do not know. I am all in the dark. And my uncle, he will not trust me. It is natural, perhaps. You see, he hardly knows me. He saw me as a child, and not since till I came to live with him here in London. But this much I do know: he is in fear of something. We have many secret societies in Russia, and one day I overheard something which made me think it was of just such a society he went in fear."

"Mademoiselle, your uncle is still in danger. I must save him. Now recount to me exactly the events of that fatal evening. Show me the chessboard, the table, how the two men sat—everything."

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She went to the side of the room and brought out a small table. The top of it was exquisite, inlaid with squares of silver and black to represent a chessboard.

"This was sent to my uncle a few weeks ago as a present, with the request that he use it in the next match he played. It was in the middle of the room—so."

Poirot examined the table with what seemed to me quite unnecessary attention. He was not conducting the inquiry at all as I would have done. Many of his questions seemed to me pointless, and upon really vital matters he seemed to have no questions to ask.

After a minute examination of the table and the exact position it had occupied, he asked to see the chessmen. Sonia Daviloff brought them to him in a box. He examined one or two of them in a perfunctory manner.

"An exquisite set," he murmured absent-mindedly.

Still not a question as to what refreshments there had been, or what people had been present.

I cleared my throat significantly.

"Don't you think, Poirot, that——"

He interrupted me peremptorily.

"Do not think, my friend. Leave all to me. Mademoiselle, is it quite impossible that I should see your uncle?"

A faint smile showed itself on her face.

"He will see you, yes. You understand, it is my part to interview all strangers first."

She disappeared. I heard a murmur of voices in the next room, and a minute later she came back and motioned us to pass into the adjoining room.

The man who lay there on a couch was an imposing figure. Tall, gaunt, with huge bushy eyebrows and white beard, and a face haggard as the result of starvation and hardships, Dr. Savaronoff was a distinct personality. I noted the peculiar formation of his head, its unusual height. A great chess player must have a great brain, I knew. I could easily understand Dr. Savaronoff's being the second greatest player in the world.

Poirot bowed.

"*M. le Docteur*, may I speak to you alone?"

Savaronoff turned to his niece.

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"Leave us, Sonia."

She disappeared obediently.

"Now, sir, what is it?"

"Dr. Savaronoff, you have recently come into an enormous fortune. If you should—die unexpectedly, who inherits it?"

"I have made a will leaving everything to my niece, Sonia Daviloff. You do not suggest——"

"I suggest nothing, but you have not seen your niece since she was a child. It would have been easy for anyone to impersonate her."

Savaronoff seemed thunderstruck by the suggestion. Poirot went on easily.

"Enough as to that. I give you the word of warning, that is all. What I want you to do now is to describe to me the game of chess the other evening."

"How do you mean—describe it?"

"Well, I do not play the chess myself, but I understand that there are various regular ways of beginning—the gambit, do they not call it?"

Dr. Savaronoff smiled a little.

"Ah! I comprehend you now. Wilson opened Ruy Lopez—one of the soundest openings there is, and one frequently adopted in tournaments and matches."

"And how long had you been playing when the tragedy happened?"

"It must have been about the third or fourth move when Wilson suddenly fell forward over the table, stone dead."

Poirot rose to depart. He flung out his last question as though it was of absolutely no importance, but I knew better.

"Had he had anything to eat or drink?"

"A whisky-and-soda, I think."

"Thank you, Dr. Savaronoff. I will disturb you no longer."

Ivan was in the hall to show us out. Poirot lingered on the threshold.

"The flat below this, do you know who lives there?"

"Sir Charles Kingwell, a member of Parliament, sir. It has been let furnished lately, though."

"Thank you."

We went out into the bright winter sunlight.



## INDOOR SPORTS

"Well, really, Poirot," I burst out. "I don't think you've distinguished yourself this time. Surely your questions were very inadequate."

"You think so, Hastings?" Poirot looked at me appealingly. "I was *bouleversé*, yes. What would you have asked?"

I considered the question carefully, and then outlined my scheme to Poirot. He listened with what seemed to be close interest. My monologue lasted until we had nearly reached home.

"Very excellent, very searching, Hastings," said Poirot, as he inserted his key in the door and preceded me up the stairs. "But quite unnecessary."

"Unnecessary!" I cried, amazed. "If the man was poisoned——"

"Aha," cried Poirot, pouncing upon a note which lay on the table. "From Japp. Just as I thought." He flung it over to me. It was brief and to the point. No traces of poison had been found, and there was nothing to show how the man came by his death.

"You see," said Poirot, "our questions would have been quite unnecessary."

"You guessed this beforehand?"

"'Forecast the probable result of the deal,' " quoted Poirot from a recent bridge problem on which I had spent much time. "*Mon ami*, when you do that successfully, you do not call it guessing."

"Don't let's split hairs," I said impatiently. "You foresaw this?"

"I did."

"Why?"

Poirot put his hand into his pocket and pulled out—a white bishop.

"Why," I cried, "you forgot to give it back to Dr. Savaronoff."

"You are in error, my friend. That bishop still reposes in my left-hand pocket. I took its fellow from the box of chessmen Mademoiselle Daviloff kindly permitted me to examine. The plural of one bishop is two bishops."

He sounded the final *s* with a great hiss. I was completely mystified.

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"But why did you take it?"

"*Parbleu*, I wanted to see if they were exactly alike."

He stood them on the table side by side.

"Well, they are, of course," I said, "exactly alike."

Poirot looked at them with his head on one side.

"They seem so, I admit. But one should take no fact for granted until it is proved. Bring me, I pray you, my little scales."

With infinite care he weighed the two chessmen, then turned to me with a face alight with triumph.

"I was right. See you, I was right. Impossible to deceive Hercule Poirot!"

He rushed to the telephone—waited impatiently.

"Is that Japp? Ah! Japp, it is you. Hercule Poirot speaks. Watch the manservant, Ivan. On no account let him slip through your fingers. Yes, yes, it is as I say."

He dashed down the receiver and turned to me.

"You see it not, Hastings? I will explain. Wilson was not poisoned, he was electrocuted. A thin metal rod passes up the middle of one of those chessmen. The table was prepared beforehand and set upon a certain spot on the floor. When the bishop was placed upon one of the silver squares, the current passed through Wilson's body, killing him instantly. The only mark was the electric burn upon his hand—his left hand, because he was left-handed. The 'special table' was an extremely cunning piece of mechanism. The table I examined was a duplicate, perfectly innocent. It was substituted for the other immediately after the murder. The thing was worked from the flat below, which, if you remember, was let furnished. But one accomplice at least was in Savaronoff's flat. The girl is an agent of a Russian secret society, working to inherit Savaronoff's money."

"And Ivan?"

"I strongly suspect that Ivan is the girl's confederate."

"It's amazing," I said at last. "Everything fits in. Savaronoff had an inkling of the plot, and that's why he was so averse to playing the match."

Poirot looked at me without speaking. Then he turned abruptly away, and began pacing up and down.

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"Have you a book on chess by any chance, *mon ami*?" he asked suddenly.

"I believe I have somewhere."

It took me some time to ferret it out, but I found it at last, and brought it to Poirot, who sank down in a chair and started reading it with the greatest attention.

In about a quarter of an hour the telephone rang. I answered it. It was Japp. Ivan had left the flat, carrying a large bundle. He had sprung into a waiting taxi, and the chase had begun. He was evidently trying to lose his pursuers. In the end he seemed to fancy that he had done so, and had then driven to a big empty house at Hampstead. The house was surrounded.

I recounted all this to Poirot. He merely stared at me as though he scarcely took in what I was saying. He held out the chess book.

"Listen to this, my friend. This is the Ruy Lopez opening. 1 P-K4, P-K4; 2 Kt-KB3, Kt-QB3; 3 B-Kt5. Then there comes a question as to Black's best third move. He has the choice of various defences. It was White's third move that killed Gilmour Wilson, 3 B-Kt5. Only the third move—does that say nothing to you?"

I hadn't the least idea what he meant, and told him so.

"Suppose, Hastings, that while you were sitting in this chair, you heard the front door being opened and shut, what would you think?"

"I should think someone had gone out."

"Yes—but there are always two ways of looking at things. Someone gone out—someone come *in*—two totally different things, Hastings. But if you assumed the wrong one, presently some little discrepancy would creep in and show you that you were on the wrong track."

"What does all this mean, Poirot?"

Poirot sprang to his feet with sudden energy.

"It means that I have been a triple imbecile. Quick, quick, to the flat in Westminster. We may yet be in time."

We tore off in a taxi. Poirot returned no answer to my excited questions. We raced up the stairs. Repeated rings and knocks brought no reply, but listening closely I could distinguish a hollow groan coming from within.

## A CHESS PROBLEM

The hall porter proved to have a master key, and after a few difficulties he consented to use it.

Poirot went straight to the inner room. A whiff of chloroform met us. On the floor was Sonia Daviloff, gagged and bound, with a great wad of saturated cotton wool over her nose and mouth. Poirot tore it off and began to take measures to restore her. Presently a doctor arrived, and Poirot handed her over to his charge and drew aside with me. There was no sign of Dr. Savaronoff.

"What does it all mean?" I asked, bewildered.

"It means that before two equal deductions I chose the wrong one. You heard me say that it would be easy for anyone to impersonate Sonia Daviloff because her uncle had not seen her for so many years?"

"Yes?"

"Well, precisely the opposite held good also. It was equally easy for anyone to *impersonate the uncle!*"

"What?"

"Savaronoff *did* die at the outbreak of the Revolution. The man who pretended to have escaped with such terrible hardships, the man so changed 'that his own friends could hardly recognize him,' the man who successfully laid claim to an enormous fortune—is an impostor. He guessed I should get on the right track in the end, so he sent off the honest Ivan on a tortuous wild-goose chase, chloroformed the girl, and got out, having by now doubtless realized most of the securities left by Madame Gospoja."

"But—but who tried to kill him?"

"Nobody tried to kill *him*. Wilson was the intended victim all along."

"But why?"

"My friend, the real Savaronoff was the second greatest chess player in the world. In all probability his impersonator did not even know the rudiments of the game. Certainly he could not sustain the fiction of a match. He tried all he knew to avoid the contest. When that failed, Wilson's doom was sealed. At all costs he must be prevented from discovering that the great Savaronoff did not even know how to play chess. Wilson was fond of the Ruy Lopez opening, and was certain to use it. The

## INDOOR SPORTS

false Savaronoff arranged for death to come with the third move, before any complications of defence set in."

"But, my dear Poirot," I persisted, "are we dealing with a lunatic? I quite follow your reasoning, and admit that you must be right, but to kill a man just to sustain his role! Surely there were simpler ways out of the difficulty than that! He could have said that his doctor forbade the strain of a match."

Poirot wrinkled his forehead.

"*Certainement*, Hastings," he said, "there were other ways, but none so convincing. Besides, you are assuming that to kill a man is a thing to avoid, are you not? Our impostor's mind, it does not act that way. I put myself in his place, a thing impossible for you. I picture his thoughts. He enjoys himself as the professor at that match. I doubt not he has visited the chess tourneys to study his part. He sits and frowns in thought; he gives the impression that he is thinking great plans, and all the time he laughs in himself. He is aware that two moves are all that he knows—and all that he *need know*. Again, it would appeal to his mind to foresee the events and to make Wilson his own executioner. . . . Oh, yes, Hastings, I begin to understand our friend and his psychology."

I shrugged.

"Well, I suppose you're right, but I can't understand any one running a risk he could so easily avoid."

"Risk!" Poirot snorted. "Where then lay the risk? Would Japp have solved the problem? No; if the false Savaronoff had not made one small mistake he would have run no risk."

"And his mistake?" I asked, although I suspected the answer.

"*Mon ami*, he overlooked the little grey cells of Hercule Poirot."

Poirot has his virtues, but modesty is not one of them.

## HOBBY SPORTS

Hobbies are not sports in the common conception of the term; and yet they possess all the elements, if sometimes in variable forms, of sports. Specialized knowledge—specialized skill—even the element of competition (as in the collecting hobbies, where collectors vie with each other for the specific “treasured object”)—and above all the important factor of their true purpose, which is relief and relaxation from the pursuits of everyday being . . . all these elements exist in the hobby sports as well as in the truer outdoor and indoor sports.

So here is a group of detective short stories in which the pursuit of butterflies, rare coins, and rare books is equally “sporting” to the pursuit of polo balls, the elusive trout, and the wild deer.



# THE PURPLE EMPEROR

BY

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

*from The Mystery of Choice*

A BUTTERFLY COLLECTING MYSTERY

*This story makes a happy bridge between the detective short stories of the outdoors, on the one hand, and the indoors on the other. For it concerns butterfly collecting, and butterfly collecting is both an outdoor and an indoor sport; even more important, it is also a hobby! . . . The Purple Emperor is notable on other counts. It is by Robert W. Chambers—the last writer in the world you would think of as the author of an out-and-out detective story. Its locale is unusual—Brittany, in France. And while it is nearly fifty years old, it reads as if it had been written yesterday.*

## I

The Purple Emperor watched me in silence. I cast again, spinning out six feet more of waterproof silk, and, as the line hissed through the air far across the pool, I saw my three flies fall on the water like drifting thistledown. The Purple Emperor sneered.

"You see," he said, "I am right. There is not a trout in Brittany that will rise to a tailed fly."

"They do in America," I replied.

"Zut for America!" observed the Purple Emperor.

"And trout take a tailed fly in England," I insisted sharply.

"Now do I care what things or people do in England?" demanded the Purple Emperor.

"You don't care for anything except yourself and your wriggling caterpillars," I said, more annoyed than I had yet been.

The Purple Emperor sniffed. His broad hairless, sunburnt features bore that obstinate expression which always irritated me. Perhaps the manner in which he wore his hat intensified



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the irritation, for the flapping brim rested on both ears, and the two little velvet ribbons which hung from the silver buckle in front wiggled and fluttered with every trivial breeze. His cunning eyes and sharp-pointed nose were out of all keeping with his fat red face. When he met my eye, he chuckled.

"I know more about insects than any man in Morbihan—or Finistère either, for that matter," he said.

"The Red Admiral knows as much as you do," I retorted.

"He doesn't," replied the Purple Emperor angrily.

"And his collection of butterflies is twice as large as yours," I added, moving down the stream to a spot directly opposite him.

"It is, is it?" sneered the Purple Emperor. "Well, let me tell you, Monsieur Darrel, in all his collection he hasn't a specimen, a single specimen, of that magnificent butterfly, *Apatura Iris*, commonly known as the 'Purple Emperor.' "

"Everybody in Brittany knows that," I said, casting across the sparkling water, "but just because you happen to be the only man who ever captured a 'Purple Emperor' in Morbihan, it doesn't follow that you are an authority on sea-trout flies. Why do you say that a Breton sea-trout won't touch a tailed fly?"

"It's so," he replied.

"Why? There are plenty of May-flies about the stream."

"Let 'em fly!" snarled the Purple Emperor, "you won't see a trout touch 'em."

My arm was aching, but I grasped my split bamboo more firmly, and, half turning, waded out into the stream and began to whip the ripples at the head of the pool. A great green dragon-fly came drifting by on the summer breeze and hung a moment above the pool, glittering like an emerald.

"There's a chance! Where is your butterfly net?" I called across the stream.

"What for? That dragon-fly? I've got dozens—*Anax Junius*, Drury, characteristic, anal angle of posterior wings, in male, round; thorax marked with——"

"That will do," I said fiercely. "Can't I point out an insect in the air without this burst of erudition? Can you tell me, in simple everyday French, what this little fly is—this one,

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flitting over the eel grass here beside me? See, it has fallen on the water."

"Huh!" sneered the Purple Emperor, "that's a *Linnobia annulus*."

"What's that?" I demanded.

Before he could answer there came a heavy splash in the pool, and the fly disappeared.

"He! he! he!" tittered the Purple Emperor. "Didn't I tell you the fish knew their business? That was a sea-trout. I hope you don't get him."

He gathered up his butterfly net, collecting box, chloroform bottle, and cyanide jar. Then he rose, swung the box over his shoulder, stuffed the poison bottles into the pockets of his silver-buttoned velvet coat, and lighted his pipe. This latter operation was a demoralizing spectacle, for the Purple Emperor, like all Breton peasants, smoked one of those microscopical Breton pipes which require ten minutes to find, ten minutes to fill, ten minutes to light, and ten seconds to finish. With true Breton stolidity he went through this solemn rite, blew three puffs of smoke into the air, scratched his pointed nose reflectively, and waddled away calling back an ironical "*Au revoir*, and bad luck to all Yankees!"

I watched him out of sight, thinking sadly of the young girl whose life he made a hell upon earth—Lys Trevec, his niece. She never admitted it, but we all knew what the black-and-blue marks meant on her soft round arm, and it made me sick to see the look of fear come into her eyes when the Purple Emperor waddled into the café of the Groix Inn.

It was commonly said that he half-starved her. This she denied. Marie Joseph and 'Fine Lelocard had seen him strike her the day after the Pardon of the Birds because she had liberated three bull-finches which he had limed the day before. I asked Lys if this were true, and she refused to speak to me for the rest of the week. There was nothing to do about it. If the Purple Emperor had not been avaricious, I should never have seen Lys at all, but he could not resist the thirty francs a week which I offered him; and Lys posed for me all day long, happy as a linnet in a pink thorn hedge. Nevertheless, the Purple Emperor hated me, and constantly threatened to send Lys

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back to her dreary flax-spinning. He was suspicious, too, and when he had gulped down the single glass of cider which proves fatal to the sobriety of most Bretons, he would pound the long, discoloured oaken table and roar curses on me, on Yves Terrec, and on the Red Admiral. We were the three objects in the world which he most hated: me, because I was a foreigner, and didn't care a rap for him and his butterflies; and the Red Admiral, because he was a rival entomologist.

He had other reasons for hating Terrec.

The Red Admiral, a little wizened wretch, with a badly adjusted glass eye and a passion for brandy, took his name from a butterfly which predominated in his collection. This butterfly commonly known to amateurs as the "Red Admiral," and to entomologists as *Vanessa Atalanta*, had been the occasion of scandal among the entomologists of France and Brittany. For the Red Admiral had taken one of these common insects, dyed it a brilliant yellow by the aid of chemicals, and palmed it off on a credulous collector as a South African species, absolutely unique. The fifty francs which he gained by this rascality were, however, absorbed in a suit for damages brought by the outraged amateur a month later; and when he had sat in the Quimperlé jail for a month, he reappeared in the little village of St. Gildas soured, thirsty, and burning for revenge. Of course we named him the Red Admiral, and he accepted the name with suppressed fury.

The Purple Emperor, on the other hand, had gained his imperial title legitimately, for it was an undisputed fact that the only specimen of that beautiful butterfly, *Apatura Iris*, or the Purple Emperor, as it is called by amateurs—the only specimen that had ever been taken in Finistère or in Morbihan—was captured and brought home alive by Joseph Marie Gloanec, ever afterwards to be known as the Purple Emperor.

When the capture of this rare butterfly became known the Red Admiral nearly went crazy. Every day for a week he trotted over to the Groix Inn, where the Purple Emperor lived with his niece, and brought his microscope to bear on the rare newly captured butterfly, in hopes of detecting a fraud. But this specimen was genuine, and he leered through his microscope in vain.

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"No chemicals there, Admiral," grinned the Purple Emperor; and the Red Admiral chattered with rage.

To the scientific world of Brittany and France the capture of an *Apatura Iris* in Morbihan was of great importance. The Museum of Quimper offered to purchase the butterfly, but the Purple Emperor, though a hoarder of gold, was a monomaniac on butterflies, and he jeered at the Curator of the Museum. From all parts of Brittany and France letters of inquiry and congratulation poured in upon him. The French Academy of Sciences awarded him a prize, and the Paris Entomological Society made him an honorary member. Being a Breton peasant, and a more than commonly pig-headed one at that, these honours did not disturb his equanimity; but when the little hamlet of St. Gildas elected him mayor, and, as is the custom in Brittany under such circumstances, he left his thatched house to take up an official life in the little Groix Inn, his head became completely turned. To be mayor in a village of nearly one hundred and fifty people! It was an empire! So he became unbearable, drinking himself viciously drunk every night of his life, maltreating his niece, Lys Trevec, like the barbarous old wretch that he was, and driving the Red Admiral nearly frantic with his eternal harping on the capture of *Apatura Iris*. Of course he refused to tell where he had caught the butterfly. The Red Admiral stalked his footsteps, but in vain.

"He! he! he!" nagged the Purple Emperor, cuddling his chin over a glass of cider. "I saw you sneaking about the St. Gildas spinney yesterday morning. So you think you can find another *Apatura Iris* by running after me? It won't do, Admiral, it won't do, d'ye see?"

The Red Admiral turned yellow with mortification and envy but the next day he actually took to his bed, for the Purple Emperor had brought home not a butterfly but a live chrysalis, which, if successfully hatched, would become a perfect specimen of the invaluable *Apatura Iris*. This was the last straw. The Red Admiral shut himself up in his little stone cottage, and for weeks now he had been invisible to everybody except 'Fine Lelocard who carried him a loaf of bread and a mullet or *langouste* every morning.

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The withdrawal of the Red Admiral from the society of St. Gildas excited first the derision and finally the suspicion of the Purple Emperor. What devilry could he be hatching? Was he experimenting with chemicals again, or was he engaged in some deeper plot, the object of which was to discredit the Purple Emperor? Roux, the postman, who carried the mail on foot once a day from Bannalec, a distance of fifteen miles each way, had brought several suspicious letters, bearing English stamps, to the Red Admiral, and the next day the Admiral had been observed at his window grinning up into the sky and rubbing his hands together. A night or two after this apparition the postman left two packages at the Groix Inn for a moment while he ran across the way to drink a glass of cider with me. The Purple Emperor, who was roaming about the café, snooping into everything that did not concern him, came upon the packages and examined the postmarks and addresses. One of the packages was square and heavy and felt like a book. The other was also square, but very light, and felt like a pasteboard box. They were both addressed to the Red Admiral, and they bore English stamps.

When Roux, the postman, came back, the Purple Emperor tried to pump him, but the poor little postman knew nothing about the contents of the packages, and after he had taken them around the corner to the cottage of the Red Admiral the Purple Emperor ordered a glass of cider, and deliberately fuddled himself until Lys came in and tearfully supported him to his room. Here he became so abusive and brutal that Lys called to me, and I went and settled the trouble without wasting any words. This also the Purple Emperor remembered, and waited his chance to get even with me.

That had happened a week ago, and until to-day he had not deigned to speak to me.

Lys had posed for me all the week, and to-day being Saturday, and I lazy, we had decided to take a little relaxation, she to visit and gossip with her little black-eyed friend Yvette in the neighbouring hamlet of St. Julien, and I to try the appetites of the Breton trout with the contents of my American fly book.

I had thrashed the stream very conscientiously for three

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hours, but not a trout had risen to my cast, and I was piqued. I had begun to believe that there were no trout in the St. Gildas stream, and would probably have given up had I not seen the sea-trout snap the little fly which the Purple Emperor had named so scientifically. That set me thinking. Probably the Purple Emperor was right, for he certainly was an expert in everything that crawled and wriggled in Brittany. So I matched, from my American fly book, the fly that the sea-trout had snapped up, and withdrawing the cast of three, knotted a new leader to the silk and slipped a fly on the loop. It was a queer fly. It was one of those unnameable experiments which fascinate anglers in sporting stores and which generally prove utterly useless. Moreover, it was a tailed fly, but of course I easily remedied that with a stroke of my penknife. Then I was all ready, and I stepped out into the hurrying rapids and cast straight as an arrow to the spot where the sea-trout had risen. Lightly as a plume the fly settled on the bosom of the pool; then came a startling splash, a gleam of silver, and the line tightened from the vibrating rod tip to the shrieking reel. Almost instantly I checked the fish, and as he floundered for a moment, making the water boil along his glittering sides, I sprang to the bank again, for I saw that the fish was a heavy one and I should probably be in for a long run down the stream. The five-ounce rod swept in a splendid circle, quivering under the strain. "Oh, for a gaff-hook!" I cried aloud, for I was now firmly convinced that I had a salmon to deal with, and no sea-trout at all.

Then as I stood bringing every ounce to bear on the sulking fish, a lithe, slender girl came hurriedly along the opposite bank calling out to me by name.

"Why, Lys!" I said, glancing up for a second, "I thought you were at St. Julien with Yvette."

"Yvette has gone to Bannalec. I went home and found an awful fight going on at the Groix Inn, and I was so frightened that I came to tell you."

The fish dashed off at that moment, carrying all the line my reel held, and I was compelled to follow him at a jump. Lys, active and graceful as a young deer, in spite of her Pont-Aven sabots, followed along the opposite bank until the fish

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settled in a deep pool, shook the line savagely once or twice, and then relapsed into the sulks.

"Fight at the Groix Inn?" I called across the water. "What fight?"

"Not exactly fight," quavered Lys, "but the Red Admiral has come out of his house at last, and he and my uncle are drinking together and disputing about butterflies. I never saw my uncle so angry, and the Red Admiral is sneering and grinning. Oh, it is almost wicked to see such a face!"

"But, Lys," I said, scarcely able to repress a smile, "your uncle and the Red Admiral are always quarrelling and drinking."

"I know—oh, dear me!—but this is different, Monsieur Darrel. The Red Admiral has grown old and fierce since he shut himself up three weeks ago, and—oh, dear! I never saw such a look in my uncle's eyes before. He seemed insane with fury. His eyes—I can't speak of it—and then Terrec came in."

"Oh," I said more gravely, "that was unfortunate. What did the Red Admiral say to his son?"

Lys sat down on a rock among the ferns, and gave me a mutinous glance from her blue eyes.

Yves Terrec, loafer, poacher, and son of Louis Jean Terrec, otherwise the Red Admiral, had been kicked out by his father, and had also been forbidden the village by the Purple Emperor, in his majestic capacity of mayor. Twice the young ruffian had returned: once to rifle the bedroom of the Purple Emperor—an unsuccessful enterprise—and another time to rob his own father. He succeeded in the latter attempt, but was never caught, although he was frequently seen roving about the forests and moors with his gun. He openly menaced the Purple Emperor; vowed that he would marry Lys in spite of all the gendarmes in Quimpeillé; and these same gendarmes he led many a long chase through brier-filled swamps and over miles of yellow gorse.

What he did to the Purple Emperor—what he intended to do—disquieted me but little; but I worried over his threat concerning Lys. During the last three months this had bothered me a great deal; for when Lys came to St. Gildas from the convent the first thing she captured was my heart. For a long time I had refused to believe that any tie of blood linked this

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dainty blue-eyed creature with the Purple Emperor. Although she dressed in the velvet-laced bodice and blue petticoat of Finistère, and wore the bewitching white coiffe of St. Gildas, it seemed like a pretty masquerade. To me she was as sweet and as gently bred as many a maiden of the noble Faubourg who danced with her cousins at a Louis XV *fête champêtre*. So when Lys said that Yves Terrec had returned openly to St. Gildas, I felt that I had better be there also.

"What did Terrec say, Lys?" I asked, watching the line vibrating above the placid pool.

The wild-rose colour crept into her cheeks. "Oh," she answered, with a little toss of her chin, "you know what he always says."

"That he will carry you away?"

"Yes."

"In spite of the Purple Emperor, the Red Admiral, and the gendarmes?"

"Yes."

"And what do you say, Lys?"

"I? Oh, nothing."

"Then let me say it for you."

Lys looked at her delicate pointed sabots, the sabots from Pont-Aven, made to order. They fitted her little foot. They were her only luxury.

"Will you let me answer for you, Lys?" I asked.

"You, Monsieur Darrel?"

"Yes. Will you let me give him his answer?"

"*Mon dieu*, why should you concern yourself, Monsieur Darrel?"

The fish lay very quiet, but the rod in my hand trembled.

"Because I love you, Lys."

The wild-rose colour in her cheeks deepened; she gave a gentle gasp then hid her curly head in her hands.

"I love you, Lys."

"Do you know what you say?" she stammered.

"Yes, I love you."

She raised her sweet face and looked at me across the pool.

"I love you," she said, while the tears stood like stars in her eyes. "Shall I come over the brook to you?"



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### II

That night Yves Terrec left the village of St. Gildas vowing vengeance against his father, who refused him shelter.

I can see him now, standing in the road, his bare legs rising like pillars of bronze from his straw-stuffed sabots, his short velvet jacket torn and soiled by exposure and dissipation, and his eyes, fierce, roving, bloodshot—while the Red Admiral squeaked curses on him, and hobbled away into his little stone cottage.

"I will not forget you!" cried Yves Terrec, and stretched out his hand towards his father with a terrible gesture. Then he whipped his gun to his cheek and took a short step forward, but I caught him by the throat before he could fire, and a second later we were rolling in the dust of the Bannalec road. I had to hit him a heavy blow behind the ear before he would let go, and then, rising and shaking myself, I dashed his muzzle-loading fowling piece to bits against a wall, and threw his knife into the river. The Purple Emperor was looking on with a queer light in his eyes. It was plain that he was sorry Terrec had not choked me to death.

"He would have killed his father," I said, as I passed him, going toward the Groix Inn.

"That's his business," snarled the Purple Emperor. There was a deadly light in his eyes. For a moment I thought he was going to attack me; but he was merely viciously drunk, so I shoved him out of my way and went to bed, tired and disgusted.

The worst of it was I couldn't sleep, for I feared that the Purple Emperor might begin to abuse Lys. I lay restlessly tossing among the sheets until I could stay there no longer. I did not dress entirely; I merely slipped on a pair of *chaussons* and sabots, a pair of knickerbockers, a jersey, and a cap. Then, loosely tying a handkerchief about my throat, I went down the worm-eaten stairs and out into the moonlit road. There was a candle flaring in the Purple Emperor's window, but I could not see him.

"He's probably dead drunk," I thought, and looked up

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at the window where, three years before, I had first seen Lys.

"Asleep, thank Heaven!" I muttered, and wandered out along the road. Passing the small cottage of the Red Admiral, I saw that it was dark, but the door was open. I stepped inside the hedge to shut it, thinking, in case Yves Terrec should be roving about, his father would lose whatever he had left.

Then, after fastening the door with a stone, I wandered on through the dazzling Breton moonlight. A nightingale was singing in a willow swamp below, and from the edge of the mere, among the tall swamp grasses, myriads of frogs chanted a bass chorus.

When I returned, the eastern sky was beginning to lighten, and across the meadows on the cliffs, outlined against the paling horizon, I saw a seaweed gatherer going to his work among the curling breakers on the coast. His long rake was balanced on his shoulder, and the sea wind carried his song across the meadows to me:

*Saint Gildas!*  
*Saint Gildas!*  
*Pray for us,*  
*Shelter us,*  
*Us who toil in the sea.*

Passing the shrine at the entrance of the village, I took off my cap and knelt in prayer to Our Lady of Fañuet; and if I neglected myself in that prayer, surely I believed Our Lady of Fañuet would be kinder to Lys. It is said that the shrine casts white shadows. I looked, but saw only the moonlight. Then very peacefully I went to bed again, and was only awakened by the clank of sabres and the trample of horses in the road below my window.

"Good gracious!" I thought. "It must be eleven o'clock for there are the gendarmes from Quimperlé."

I looked at my watch; it was only half-past eight, and as the gendarmes made their rounds every Thursday at eleven, I wondered what had brought them out so early to St. Gildas.

"Of course," I grumbled, rubbing my eyes, "they are after Terrec," and I jumped into my limited bath.

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Before I was completely dressed I heard a timid knock, and opening my door, razor in hand, stood astonished and silent. Lys, her blue eyes wide with terror, leaned on the threshold.

"My darling!" I cried. "What on earth is the matter?" But she only clung to me, panting like a wounded sea-gull. At last, when I drew her into the room and raised her face to mine, she spoke in a heart-breaking voice:

"Oh, Dick! They are going to arrest you, but I will die before I believe one word of what they say. No, don't ask me," and she began to sob desperately.

When I found that something really serious was the matter, I flung on my coat and cap, and, slipping one arm about her waist, went down the stairs and out into the road. Four gendarmes sat on their horses in front of the café door; beyond them, the entire population of St. Gildas gaped, ten deep.

"Hello, Durand!" I said to the brigadier. "What the devil is this I hear about arresting me?"

"It's true, *mon ami*," replied Durand with sepulchral sympathy. I looked him over from the tip of his spurred boots to his sulphur-yellow sabre belt, then upward, button by button, to his disconcerted face.

"What for?" I said scornfully. "Don't try any cheap sleuth work on me! Speak up, man, what's the trouble?"

The Purple Emperor, who sat in the doorway staring at me, started to speak, but thought better of it and got up and went into the house. The gendarmes rolled their eyes mysteriously and looked wise.

"Come, Durand," I said impatiently, "what's the charge?"

"Murder," he said in a faint voice.

"What!" I cried incredulously. "Nonsense! Do I look like a murderer? Get off your horse, you stupid, and tell me who's murdered."

Durand got down, looking very silly, and came up to me, offering his hand with a propitiatory grin.

"It was the Purple Emperor who denounced you! See, they found your handkerchief at his door——"

"Whose door, for Heaven's sake?" I cried.

"Why, the Red Admiral's!"

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"The Red Admiral's? What has he done?"

"Nothing—he's only been murdered."

I could scarcely believe my senses, although they took me over to the little stone cottage and pointed out the blood-spattered room. But the horror of the thing was that the corpse of the murdered man had disappeared, and there only remained a nauseating lake of blood on the stone floor, in the centre of which lay a human hand. There was no doubt as to whom the hand belonged, for everybody who had ever seen the Red Admiral knew that the shrivelled bit of flesh which lay in the thickening blood was the hand of the Red Admiral. To me it looked like the severed claw of some gigantic bird.

"Well," I said, "there's been murder committed. Why don't you do something?"

"What?" asked Durand.

"I don't know. Send for the *Commissaire*."

"He's at Quimperlé. I telegraphed."

"Then send for a doctor, and find out how long this blood has been coagulating."

"The chemist from Quimperlé is here; he's a doctor."

"What does he say?"

"He says that he doesn't know."

"And whom are you going to arrest?" I inquired, turning away from the spectacle on the floor.

"I don't know," said the brigadier solemnly. "You are denounced by the Purple Emperor, because he found your handkerchief at the door when he went out this morning."

"Just like a pig-headed Breton!" I exclaimed, thoroughly angry. "Did he not mention Yves Terrec?"

"No."

"Of course not," I said. "He overlooked the fact that Terrec tried to shoot his father last night, and that I took away his gun. All that counts for nothing when he finds my handkerchief at the murdered man's door."

"Come into the café," said Durand, much disturbed, "we can talk it over, there. Of course, Monsieur Darrel, I have never had the faintest idea that you were the murderer!"

The four gendarmes and I walked across the road to the Groix Inn and entered the café. It was crowded with Bretons,

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smoking, drinking, and jabbering in half a dozen dialects, all equally unsatisfactory to a civilized ear; and I pushed through the crowd to where little Max Fortin, the chemist of Quimperlé, stood smoking a vile cigar.

"This is a bad business," he said, shaking hands and offering me the mate to this cigar, which I politely declined.

"Now, Monsieur Fortin," I said, "it appears that the Purple Emperor found my handkerchief near the murdered man's door this morning, and so he concludes"—here I glared at the Purple Emperor—"that I am the assassin. I will now ask him a question," and turning on him suddenly, I shouted, "What were you doing at the Red Admiral's door?"

The Purple Emperor started and turned pale, and I pointed at him triumphantly.

"See what a sudden question will do. Look how embarrassed he is, and yet I do not charge him with murder; and I tell you, gentlemen, that man there knows as well as I do who was the murderer of the Red Admiral!"

"I don't!" bawled the Purple Emperor.

"You do," I said. "It was Yves Terrec."

"I don't believe it," he said obstinately, dropping his voice.

"Of course not, being pig-headed."

"I am not pig-headed," he roared again, "but I am mayor of St. Gildas, and I do not believe that Yves Terrec killed his father."

"You saw him try to kill him last night?"

The mayor grunted.

"And you saw what I did?"

He grunted again.

"And," I went on, "you heard Yves Terrec threaten to kill his father. You heard him curse the Red Admiral and swear to kill him. Now the father is murdered and his body is gone."

"And your handkerchief?" sneered the Purple Emperor.

"I dropped it, of course."

"And the seaweed gatherer who saw you last night lurking about the Red Admiral's cottage," grinned the Purple Emperor.

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I was startled at the man's malice.

"That will do," I said. "It is perfectly true that I was walking on the Bannalec road last night, and that I stopped to close the Red Admiral's door, which was ajar, although his light was not burning. After that I went up the road to the Dinez Woods, and then walked over by St. Julien, whence I saw the seaweed gatherer on the cliffs. He was near enough for me to hear what he sang. What of that?"

"What did you do then?"

"Then I stopped at the shrine and said a prayer, and then I went to bed and slept until Brigadier Durand's gendarmes awoke me with their clatter."

"Now, Monsieur Darrel," said the Purple Emperor, lifting a fat finger and shooting a wicked glance at me, "now, Monsieur Darrel, which did you wear last night on your midnight stroll—sabots or shoes?"

I thought a moment. "Shoes—no, sabots. I just slipped on my *chaussons* and went out in my sabots."

"Which was it, shoes or sabots?" snarled the Purple Emperor.

"Sabots, you fool."

"Are these your sabots?" he asked, lifting up a wooden shoe with my initials cut on the instep.

"Yes," I replied.

"Then how did this blood come on the other one?" he shouted, and held up a sabot, the mate to the first, on which a drop of blood had spattered.

"I haven't the least idea," I said calmly; but my heart was beating very fast and I was furiously angry.

"You blockhead!" I said, controlling my rage, "I'll make you pay for this when they catch Yves Terrec and convict him. Brigadier Durand, do your duty if you think I am under suspicion. Arrest me, but grant me one favour. Put me in the Red Admiral's cottage, and I'll see whether I can't find some clue that you have overlooked. Of course, I won't disturb anything until the *Commissaire* arrives! Bah! You all make me very ill."

"He's hardened," observed the Purple Emperor, wagging his head.

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"What motive had I to kill the Red Admiral?" I asked them all scornfully. And they all cried:

"None! Yves Terrec is the man!"

Passing out of the door I swung around and shook my finger at the Purple Emperor.

"Oh, I'll make you dance for this, my friend," I said; and I followed Brigadier Durand across the street to the cottage of the murdered man.

### III

They took me at my word and placed a gendarme with a bared sabre at the gateway by the hedge.

"Give me your parole," said poor Durand, "and I will let you go where you wish." But I refused, and began prowling about the cottage looking for clues. I found lots of things that some people would have considered most important, such as ashes from the Red Admiral's pipe, footprints in a dusty vegetable bin, bottles smelling of Pouldu cider, and dust—oh, lots of dust!—but I was not an expert, only a stupid, everyday amateur; so I defaced the footprints with my thick shooting boots, and I declined to examine the pipe ashes through a microscope, although the Red Admiral's microscope stood on the table close at hand.

At last I found what I had been looking for, some long wisps of straw, curiously depressed and flattened in the middle, and I was certain I had found the evidence that would settle Yves Terrec for the rest of his life. It was plain as the nose on your face. The straws were sabot straws, flattened where the foot had pressed them, and sticking straight out where they projected beyond the sabot. Now nobody in St. Gildas used straw in sabots except a fisherman who lived near St. Julien, and the straw in his sabots was ordinary yellow wheat straw! This straw, or rather these straws, were from the stalks of the red wheat which only grows inland, and which, everybody in St. Gildas knew, Yves Terrec wore in his sabots. I was perfectly satisfied; and when, three hours later, a hoarse shouting from the Bannalec road brought me to the window, I was not surprised to see Yves Terrec, bloody, dishevelled, hatless, with his

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strong arms bound behind him, walking with bent head between two mounted gendarmes. The crowd around him swelled every minute, crying: "Parricide! Parricide! Death to the murderer!" As he passed my window I saw great clots of mud on his dusty sabots, from the heels of which projected wisps of red-wheat straw. Then I walked back into the Red Admiral's study, determined to find what the microscope would show on the wheat straws. I examined each one very carefully, and then, my eyes aching, I rested my chin on my hand and leaned back in the chair. I had not been as fortunate as some detectives, for there was no evidence that the straws had ever been used in a sabot at all. Furthermore, directly across the hallway stood a carved Breton chest, and now I noticed for the first time that, from beneath the closed lid, dozens of similar red-wheat straws projected, bent exactly as mine were bent by the weight of the lid.

I yawned in disgust. It was apparent that I was not cut out for a detective, and I bitterly pondered over the difference between clues in real life and clues in a detective story. After a while I rose, walked over to the chest and opened the lid. The interior was wadded with the red-wheat straws, and on this wadding lay two curious glass jars, two or three small vials, several empty bottles labelled chloroform, a collecting jar of cyanide of potassium, and a book. In a farther corner of the chest were some letters bearing English stamps, and also the torn coverings of two parcels, all from England, and all directed to the Red Admiral under his proper name of *Sieur Louis Jcen Terrec, St. Gildas, par Moëlan, Finistère*.

All these traps I carried over to the desk, shut the lid of the chest, and sat down to read the letters. They were written in commercial French, evidently by an Englishman.

Freely translated, the contents of the first letter were as follows:

London, June 12, 1894

Dear Monsieur (*sic*):

Your kind favour of the 19th inst. received and contents noted. The latest work on the *Lepidoptera* of England is Blowzer's *How to Catch British Butterflies*, with notes and tables, and



## HOBBY SPORTS

an introduction by Sir Thomas Sniffer. The price of this work (in one volume, calf) is £5 or 125 francs of French money. A post-office order will receive our prompt attention. We beg to remain,

Yours, etc.,

FRADLEY & TOOMER,  
470 Regent Square, London, S.W.

The next letter was even less interesting. It merely stated that the money had been received and the book would be forwarded. The third engaged my attention, and I shall quote it, the translation being a free one:

Dear Sir:

Your letter of the 1st of July was duly received, and we at once referred it to Mr. Fradley himself. Mr. Fradley, being much interested in your question, sent your letter to Professor Schweineri, of the Berlin Entomological Society, whose note Blowzer refers to on page 630, in his *How to Catch British Butterflies*. We have just received an answer from Professor Schweineri, which we translate into French—(see enclosed slip). Professor Schweineri begs to present to you two jars of cythyl, prepared under his own supervision. We forward the same to you. Trusting that you will find everything satisfactory, we remain,

Yours sincerely,

FRADLEY & TOOMER

The enclosed slip read as follows:

MESSRS. FRADLEY & TOOMER

Gentlemen:

Cythline, a complex hydrocarbon, was first used by Professor Schnoot, of Antwerp, a year ago. I discovered an analogous formula about the same time and named it cythyl. I have used it with great success everywhere. It is as certain as a magnet. I beg to present you three small jars, and would be pleased to have you forward two of them to your correspondent in St. Gildas with my compliments. Blowzer's quotation of me,

## THE PURPLE EMPEROR

on page 630 of his glorious work, *How to Catch British Butterflies*, is correct.

Yours, etc.

HEINRICH SCHWEINERI,  
PH.D., D.D., D.S., M.S.

When I had finished this letter I folded it up and put it into my pocket with the others. Then I opened Blowzer's valuable work, *How to Catch British Butterflies*, and turned to page 630.

Now, although the Red Admiral could only have acquired the book very recently, and although all the other pages were perfectly clean, this particular page was thumb'd black, and heavy pencil marks inclosed a paragraph at the bottom of the page. This is the paragraph:

Professor Schweineri says: "Of the two old methods used by collectors for the capture of the swift-winged, high-flying *Apatura Iris*, or Purple Emperor, the first, which was using a long-handled net, proved successful once in a thousand times; and the second, the placing of bait upon the ground, such as decayed meat, dead cats, rats, etc., was not only disagreeable even for an enthusiastic collector, but also very uncertain. Once in five hundred times would the splendid butterfly leave the tops of his favourite oak trees to circle about the fetid bait offered. I have found cythyl a perfectly sure bait to draw this beautiful butterfly to the ground, where it can be easily captured. An ounce of cythyl placed in a yellow saucer under an oak tree will draw to it every *Apatura Iris* within a radius of twenty miles. So, if any collector who possesses a little cythyl, even though it be in a sealed bottle in his pocket—if such a collector does not find a single *Apatura Iris* fluttering close about him within an hour, let him be satisfied that the *Apatura Iris* does not inhabit his country."

When I had finished reading this note I sat for a long while thinking hard. Then I examined the two jars. They were labelled CYTHYL. One was full, the other *nearly full*. "The rest must be on the corpse of the Red Admiral," I thought, "no matter if it is in a corked bottle. . . ."

## HOBBY SPORTS

I took all the things back to the chest, laid them carefully on the straw, and closed the lid. The gendarme sentinel at the gate saluted me respectfully as I crossed over to the Groix Inn. The Inn was surrounded by an excited crowd, and the hallway was choked with gendarmes and peasants. On every side they greeted me cordially, announcing that the real murderer was caught; but I pushed by them without a word and ran upstairs to find Lys. She opened her door when I knocked and threw both arms about my neck. I took her to my breast and kissed her. After a moment I asked her if she would obey me no matter what I commanded, and she said she would, with a proud humility that touched me.

"Then go at once to Yvette in St. Julien," I said. "Ask her to harness the dog-cart and drive you to the convent in Quimperlé. Wait for me there. Will you do this without questioning me, my darling?"

She raised her face to mine. "Kiss me," she said innocently; the next moment she had vanished.

I walked deliberately into the Purple Emperor's room and peered into the gauze-covered box which had held the chrysalis of *Apatura Iris*. It was as I expected. The chrysalis was empty and transparent, and a great crack ran down the middle of its back, but, on the netting inside the box, a magnificent butterfly slowly waved its burnished purple wings; for the chrysalis had given up its silent tenant, the butterfly symbol of immortality. Then a great fear fell upon me. I know now that it was the fear of the Black Priest, but neither then nor for years after did I know that the Black Priest had ever lived on earth. As I bent over the box I heard a confused murmur outside the house which ended in a furious shout of "Parricide!" and I heard the gendarmes ride away behind a wagon which rattled sharply on the flinty highway. I went to the window. In the wagon sat Yves Terrec, bound and wild-eyed, two gendarmes at either side of him, and all around the wagon rode mounted gendarmes whose bared sabres scarcely kept the crowd away.

"Parricide!" they howled. "Let him die!"

I stepped back and opened the gauze-covered box. Very gently but firmly I took the splendid butterfly by its closed

## THE PURPLE EMPEROR

fore wings and lifted it unharmed between my thumb and forefinger. Then, holding it concealed behind my back, I went down into the café.

Of all the crowd that had filled it, shouting for the death of Yves Terrec, only three persons remained seated in front of the huge empty fireplace. They were the Brigadier Durand, Max Fortin, the chemist of Quimperlé, and the Purple Emperor. The latter looked abashed when I entered, but I paid no attention to him and walked straight to the chemist.

"Monsieur Fortin," I said "do you know much about hydrocarbons?"

"They are my speciality," he said, astonished.

"Have you ever heard of such a thing as cythyl?"

"Schweineri's cythyl? Oh, yes! We use it in perfumery."

"Good!" I said. "Has it an odour?"

"No—and yes. One is always aware of its presence, but really nobody can affirm it has an odour. It is curious," he continued, looking at me, "it is very curious you should have asked me that, for all day I have been imagining I detected the presence of cythyl."

"Do you imagine so now?" I asked.

"Yes, more than ever."

I sprang to the front door and tossed out the butterfly. The splendid creature beat the air for a moment, flitted uncertainly hither and thither, and then, to my astonishment, sailed majestically back into the café and alighted on the hearthstone. For a moment I was nonplussed, but when my eyes rested on the Purple Emperor I comprehended in a flash.

"Lift that hearthstone!" I cried to the Brigadier Durand. "Pry it up with your scabbard!"

The Purple Emperor suddenly fell forward in his chair, his face ghastly white, his jaw loose with terror.

"What is cythyl?" I shouted, seizing him by the arm; but he plunged heavily from his chair, face downward on the floor, and at the same moment a cry from the chemist made me turn. There stood the Brigadier Durand, one hand supporting the hearthstone, one hand raised in horror. There stood Max Fortin, the chemist, rigid with excitement, and below, in the hollow bed where the hearthstone had rested, lay a crushed

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mass of bleeding human flesh, from the midst of which stared a cheap glass eye. I seized the Purple Emperor and dragged him to his feet.

"Look!" I cried. "Look at your old friend, the Red Admiral!" but he only smiled in a vacant way, and rolled his head muttering: "Bait for butterflies! Cythyl! Oh, no, no, no! You can't do it, Admiral, d'ye see. I alone own the Purple Emperor! I alone am the Purple Emperor!"

And the same carriage that bore me to Quimperlé to claim my bride carried him to Quimper, gagged and bound, a foaming, howling lunatic.

This, then, is the story of the Purple Emperor. I might tell you a pleasanter story if I chose; but concerning the fish that I had hold of, whether it was a salmon, a grilse, or a sea-trout, I may not say, because I have promised Lys, and she has promised me, that no power on earth shall wring from our lips the mortifying confession that the fish escaped.

# THE VANISHED CROWN

BY

ERNEST BRAMAH

*from Max Carrados Mysteries*

MAX CARRADOS IN A NUMISMATIC MYSTERY SEEKS

*One could scarcely solicit the services of a more able detective to investigate the mystery of a rare coin's disappearance than blind Max Carrados, whose own hobby is coin collecting and who is the "author" of such learned works on numismatic subjects as Tetradrachms of Syracuse, The "Persian Archer" on a Stater of Corinth, and Unedited Greek Coins in the Collection of Tsarskō Selo. Coin-collecting detective-story addicts will also be well served to read Gilbert K. Chesterton's The Head of Caesar, from The Wisdom of Father Brown, in which the quiet little cleric-detective, Father Brown, exercises his intuitive faculties in a numismatic crime problem.*

Max Carrados always seemed inclined to laugh quietly if anyone happened to mention the curious disappearance of the Willington Petition Crown.

As a specialist in Greek tetradrachms Carrados would naturally only have a condescending interest in any of the non-classical branches of numismatics, but it was an interest that drew him to every word of coin news that appeared. As his delicate fingertips skimmed the morning-paper headings at breakfast one day they "read" for him a line that promised some entertainment, and the item was duly blue-pencilled for consideration later. It was no effort for the blind man to pick out all the essentials of the newspaper's contents in this way; he could even, though not with the same facility, read the ordinary smaller type, but where there was no special reason for this it was his custom to mark off such paragraphs for his secretary's subsequent attention. This was in the nature of their ordinary daily routine, and an hour later Greatorrex noticed and read aloud the following extract from the *Daily Record*:

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### RARE COIN DISAPPEARS AUCTION ROOM SENSATION

"Collectors and dealers who foregathered at Messrs. Lang & Lang's well-known sale-rooms yesterday in the hope of bidding for an exceptionally fine specimen of the celebrated Petition Crown of Charles II were doomed to disappointment. When the lot in question was reached and the coin was displayed at the tables it was discovered that something was wrong. The Petition Crown, which had previously been on view for several days and up to the hour of the sale, had disappeared and a comparatively valueless coin of a somewhat similar type occupied its numbered receptacle.

"Immediate search among the other lots, both sold and unsold, failed to reveal any trace of the missing rarity and the whole affair is so far shrouded in mystery.

"Piquancy is added to the incident by the fact that the last person to see and handle the coin was a well-known lady journalist, who, however, disclaims any numismatic cravings. After inspecting the coin merely as a rare and valuable curiosity the lady in question returned the tray containing it to the attendant in charge, who at once replaced it in the cabinet. As already stated, when it was next required the Crown had vanished.

"The Petition Crown holds the auction record among English coins, an example having realized £500 some years ago. It is generally stated that only fifteen specimens of this excessively rare coin were ever struck, and all but two or three are now in public collections and therefore out of reach of enthusiasts."

"That's rather like another plant where a string of pearls was changed some years ago," volunteered Greator, laying aside the paper in favour of his own reminiscences. He was a cheerful, mercurial youth who conceived that the more important part of his duty was to regale Mr. Carrados with his personal views on life and affairs. "Do you remember the one I mean, sir?"

"Yes; there was a woman in that business also. But the two cases have nothing in common, really."

## THE VANISHED CROWN

"How do you mean? Both were at auction sales; both——"

"True," interrupted Carrados, "but the essential motives fall into two quite different classes. Good pearls are readily saleable, and it is simply a matter of rearranging them and making them up in a different form. But what is a man going to do with a Petition Crown? Wear it on his watch-chain? As a marketable piece of loot he might as well carry off a Turner from the National Gallery, or, indeed, one of the lions from Trafalgar Square. Its trade value is about one and ninepence for the melting-pot."

"Oh, come, sir," protested Greatorex. "This account speaks of a few other specimens knocking about. Surely in a year or two's time this one could be positively identified as stolen?"

Max Carrados pulled open a drawer of his desk and took out a pamphlet.

"Here is Lang's catalogue of this sale," he said, passing it across. "Very likely that crown will be illustrated among the plates at the end. Just see."

"Quite right, sir. It is Lot 64, and it is reproduced in one of those photographic-process types here on Plate 2."

"Take a glass and look into it. It is described as exceptionally fine, but you will almost certainly find a number of small cuts and dents here and there on the surface."

"Yes; I see what you mean. They don't show ordinarily."

"All the same they label the specimen as definitely as if it were a numbered bank-note. The simplest way out of that would be to carry it loose in your pocket for a few years. That would reduce its cabinet value to one half, but it would effectually wipe out its identity. The trouble would be that whenever you started to dispose of it you would be pointedly asked for the pedigree. What collection had it come from last? All these details are on record and easily available. No, it's amateur work, whoever it may be, Greatorex."

"I was rather hoping that someone would bring it round here to offer sooner or later," remarked the adventurous Greatorex, still examining the plate. "I'll bet I could spot it by that scratch over his majesty's eye."

"Then you will certainly be disappointed," was the unpromising reply. "If the coin really has been stolen—and



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that's a palpable 'if' so far—ten to one its immediate destination is the private drawer of some collector who will be content to handle and gloat over it in secret for the remaining days of his life."

The subject was laid to rest, with no indication that it would ever be raised again. But the Petition Crown was fated to persist, and before lunch time a telephone call from Mr. Carlyle had resurrected it.

"Busy, Max?" chirruped the brisk and debonair voice of his friend the inquiry agent. "Not to me? Dear old chap! Well, I dare say you've read all about the disappearance of Lord Willington's Petition Crown in the paper this morning. I thought you might be interested as it's something in your line."

"Creatorex is, at all events," replied Mr. Carrados. "He was half expecting that someone might bring it here in the course of the day. Do you—strictly between ourselves, of course—do you happen to have it for disposal, Louis?"

"Do I happen to have it for disposal?" repeated Mr. Carlyle in a slightly mystified tone. "I thought you would have read that the coin has been stolen. However, Max, in my office at this moment there is a young lady who is very much concerned at being implicated in the affair. Frankly, as the auctioneers are naturally doing all that can be done to solve the riddle, I did not see how I could be of any real service to her, and I told her so. But she seemed so disappointed that as a—er—well——"

"As a sort of forlorn hope?"

"Not at all; most certainly not!" protested Mr. Carlyle indignantly. "I explained that as you were both a keen coin collector yourself, and an enthusiast in certain branches of criminal research, if—if, mind you, Max—you cared to hear what she had to say, you would be in an exceptional position to give her a word of advice. And that is really the long and the short of the whole matter, my mordacious friend."

"Very likely, my ingenious sleuth, but I imagine that there is a small piece missing somewhere. You were not wont to turn young and beautiful suppliants from your office door. What is the real reason for this professional reluctance on your part?"

"Max," came Mr. Carlyle's cautiously restrained voice,

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"Miss Frensham is young, but she is *not* beautiful, and to put it in that way is to pay her a noticeable compliment. She is also, I gather, regrettably hard up. Now my business is conducted on a purely financial basis, whereas you amuse yourself."

"All right, you old humbug," said Carrados amiably, "send her along."

Miss Frensham came at once. In view of her circumstances, Carrados could not but deem her extravagant, for nothing but a taxi from door to door could explain the promptness of her arrival. Mr. Carlyle had not maligned her looks: plain she undoubtedly was, not in any sense descriptably ugly but with a sort of pug-dog grotesquery. Her dress made no attempt to counteract physical deficiencies, but when she spoke Carrados's unemotional face instantly lit up with pleasure, for her voice had the rare quality of gracious music.

"How good of you to let me come in this way, Mr. Carrados!" she exclaimed as they shook hands.

"I infer that you are the lady of the paragraph," and the lifted hand of the blind man indicated the open sheet of the *Record* lying near by.

"Yes, in a sense I am." Miss Frensham seemed troubled for a moment. "But I am not really a 'well-known lady journalist', Mr. Carrados. I am a very obscure one. That was just swank, and also because I felt sure that under that description no one who knew would ever think of *me*."

"Oh," said Mr. Carrados with an amused and deepening interest, "so in addition to being the heroine of the adventure you wrote it up?"

"Yes, ultimately I did. At first I was too upset to think about that. But I had gone to the place yesterday to see if there wasn't a news story in this *Petition Crown* and it seemed rather a pity to miss it when it turned out to be a very much better news story than I had ever expected. And then I knew that if I got my 'copy' taken I could keep my own name out. I had particular reasons for wishing that."

Carrados nodded without showing any curiosity about the reasons. "What is it exactly that you want to do now?"

"Well, I feel that I am really under suspicion of having taken the coin—I don't see how they can think anything else

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in the circumstances—and the only way of clearing myself is to find out who did take it. Knowing that I didn't, I naturally think that it must be the attendant there, because he seems to have been the only other person who could have."

"Reverse the argument, and the attendant, knowing that he didn't, naturally thinks that it must be you, because you seem to be the only other person who could have. And so both sides get into difficulties along that obvious line. Suppose we ignore the two palpable suspects—yourself and the attendant. Now who else might it have been?"

"That is the difficulty, Mr. Carrados; it could have been no one else. I returned the coin to the attendant; he put it back in the case and remained on duty there until he displayed it on the tray to show round. Then it was discovered to have been taken."

"I suppose," said Carrados, "you really were the last to inspect the coin? Sitting there you would probably have noticed if anyone else had asked for it?"

"I only know what they said, but no one seemed to have any doubt about it. I went out to—to get some lunch and when I got back the sale was going on."

"Ah," said the blind man thoughtfully. "Of course you would have to. Suppose you tell me the news story all through."

"I hoped that you would let me," replied the girl. "But I was afraid of taking up too much of your time. Well, I have been living by journalism for some time now. Rather suddenly I had to support myself by some kind of work, and there was nothing else that I seemed able to do. I have always been fond of writing, and I had quite a lot of stories and articles and poems that I had been told by friends were quite good enough to print. I brought them to London with me, but somehow they didn't seem so much thought of here. I got to know one or two other girls who wrote, and they told me that my sort of stuff would be all right when I got into the peerage or became a leading lady, but if I wanted to live meanwhile it was absolutely necessary to cultivate a 'news nose'. I soon saw what they meant: it wasn't absolutely necessary that it should be news you wrote, but it had to give the impression that it was."

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"Miss Frensham, I have been a practical journalist myself," remarked Carrados. "You have grasped the sacred torch."

"At all events, I could just keep the domestic pot boiling after that. It was rather a near thing sometimes, but there was someone—he is a sub-editor on the *Daily Record* actually—who helped me more than I can ever say. He told me of this sale. 'There's a coin to be sold that's expected to break the record,' he said; and he explained to me which it was. 'There ought to be a news story in it if it does—say two hundred words in the ordinary way, four hundred if you can make it kick. I'll try and put it through.' I thought that I had made it kick, so I went to four hundred."

"Yes," agreed her auditor, "I certainly think you can claim that amount of movement."

"I didn't know anything about a coin auction, of course, but I went on to the place. That was yesterday—the morning of the sale. There were two or three others—men—looking at the coins—nothing to what I had expected—and one attendant who gave out the drawers in which they were arranged as they were asked for.

"I expected some sort of formality before they let me see the crown—so valuable—but there was really nothing at all. I just said, 'Can I see No. 64, please?' and he simply pulled one of the shallow drawers out of its case and put it down before me on the table. There were about a dozen other lots in the drawer, each in its separate little box. Then he turned his back on me to attend to something else. I believe that I could have picked up the coin and walked out of the place with it."

"We are a trustful people both in war and peace," conceded Mr. Carrados. "But I think you would have found that you couldn't quite do that."

"Well, I didn't try—though it certainly did occur to me that there might be a stunt of some sort in it; you look out for them when one means a week's good keep. I made a few notes that I thought I could work in and then found that it was just one o'clock—the sale was to begin at a quarter past. As the attendant took the coins away I asked him how fast they sold them.

"If you only want to see that lot sold, Miss, a quarter to

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two will be in plenty of time. If you reckon a hundred lots to the hour you'll be well on the safe side.'

"I thanked him and went out. That was really all I had to do with the coin. I never saw it again. When I got back to the sale-room the auction was going on. Even then there were only about twelve or fifteen people there. They sat at the tables—I suppose you know how they are arranged, as a sort of hollow oblong, with the auctioneer at one end and the attendant showing the coins up and down in the middle?—and a few sitting here and there about the room. I didn't sit down; I stood between the table and the door waiting for the price of Lot 64, which was the only thing I wanted.

"When he got to it there was a slight stir of interest, though a more lethargic set of enthusiasts I never saw. I always imagined that collectors were a most excitable race who lost their heads at bidding and went on and on madly. These might have been buying arrowroot for all the emotion they showed."

"Half of them would be dealers who had long ago got over all human enthusiasm; the remainder would be collectors, too afraid lest the others should think that they were keen on something. And then?"

"The attendant was carrying the coin round on a little tray when one man picked it up and looked at it. 'Hullo!' he said, and passed it to the next. 'This is the wrong lot,' said that one, and then the auctioneer leaned over and called to the attendant, 'Come, come, my lad—No. 64,' and the attendant said, 'This is No. 64,' in an aggrieved way and showed him the numbered box. Then the attendant and those near that end began to look among the unsold lots, and after that they turned out all the sold lots—they had mostly been put into little envelopes—and when they came to the end of these everyone looked at everyone else and said nothing. Then I think they began it all over gain—the hunting, I mean—when the auctioneer hit on his desk.

"This is an important lot. Very sorry, but we can't go on with the selling until we know more where we are. I suppose someone did see the Petition Crown this morning?"

"Two or three men said that they had, and the attendant, looking round, recognized me.

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" 'That lady was the last to see the lot before the sale, sir,' I heard him say. 'Better ask her.'

" 'Did you——' began the auctioneer, and then, I suppose, recognizing that I mightn't like to carry on a shouting conversation across the room, he added, 'Do you mind coming round here?'

"I went round the tables to where he was sitting, and he continued:

" 'Did you see this lot before the sale? Our man thinks that you were the last to have it out.'

" 'Yes,' I admitted. 'I saw it, and it was there when I returned the drawer. Of course I don't know that I was the last, but it was about one o'clock.'

" 'No one had it out later, Muir?'

" 'No, sir. I've been on this spot ever since, and that tray hasn't been asked for.'

"The auctioneer seemed to consider, and everyone else looked first at one and then the other of us. I began to feel very uncomfortable.

"I suppose it really was the Petition Crown you saw at one o'clock?" he asked after a bit.

" 'I suppose it must have been,' I replied. 'I copied the PETITION from the edge into this notebook.'

" 'Well, that fixes it all right. You see how awkward it is for us, Miss—Miss——'

"I gave him my name.

" 'Miss Frensham. We have to do the best we can in the circumstances. I can't say at the moment on whom the loss will fall—if the coin really proves to have disappeared—but the figure is considerable. Now everyone else in the room is known to us by sight; we have the names and addresses of them all.'

" 'You have my name,' I said, 'and I am living at the Allied Arts Hostel in Lower Gower Street.'

" 'Thank you,' he replied, writing it down. 'But of course that means very little to us. Is there anyone convenient who knows you personally to whom we can refer? You must understand that this does not imply any sort of suspicion of your *bona fides*; it is only putting you on equal terms with the rest of the company.'

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"I thought for a moment. I saw a great many unpleasant possibilities. Most of all I knew that I wanted to keep this from my people.

" 'The Editor of the *Daily Record* knows me slightly,' I replied 'but I don't see that he can say anything beyond that. And as to suspicion, I am afraid that you already have some. If you have any ladies on your staff I am quite willing to turn out everything I have before them'—I thought that perhaps this would settle the matter off-hand, and I couldn't help adding rather viciously: 'and after that I dare say the rest of the company will do the same before you.'

" 'Yes,' he considered, 'but you've been out for half an hour, so that that would really prove nothing. At lunch, I suppose?'

"I began to see that things were fitting in rather unpleasantly for me.

" 'Yes,' I said.

" 'Perhaps I had better note where you went. We don't know where this may land us, and in the end it may be to your interest to have a waitress or someone who can identify you over that time.'

" 'I'm afraid I can't do that,' I had to say. 'There was no one who noticed me.'

" 'Surely—Well, anyhow, the place?'

"I shook my head. He looked at me for a moment and then wrote something down. . . . You think that was very suspicious, Mr. Carrados?"

"Your advocate never thinks that anything you do is suspicious," replied the suave listener. "Probably they would."

"They seemed to. Well, Mr. Carrados, I don't mind telling you, but somehow I couldn't say it before that—I felt—unfriendly battery of eyes. . . . My lunch consisted of three very unladylike thick slices of bread and butter, and I ate them as I walked slowly up and down the stairs at a tube station. So, you see, there could be no corroboration."

"Perhaps we shall do better—not even require it," he replied quietly. "What happened next?"

"I don't think that there was much more. They gave up looking for the coin. The auctioneer said that he had telephoned to someone—his solicitor or Scotland Yard, I imagined, but I

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didn't hear which—to know what ought to be done, and he hoped that everyone would remain until they knew. Then the sale began again. I went across and sat down on a chair away from the table. I had no interest in the sale—in fact, I hated it—and after a time I took out my pad and tried to write the paragraph. Very soon the sale came to an end and the men began to go—I suppose they had been told to. I waited, for I wasn't going to seem in a hurry, until I was the only person left. After a bit the man who had been selling came in and seemed rather surprised to see me still there. He said he hoped I didn't think that I was being detained, and I said, 'Oh, no, I was just finishing something.' He said that that was all right, only they were going to lock up the room then and have it thoroughly looked over to-day—it was just possible that something might turn up, though he was rather afraid that it would remain a mystery to the end. He was quite nice about it, and told me several curious things that had happened in connection with sales in the past. Then I left and he locked the door after us and, I believe, took the key."

Carrados laughed appreciatively.

"Yes, it was rather like the proverb about the stolen horse, wasn't it?" said the girl. "But I suppose they felt that even the unlikeliest chance must be taken. Anyway, they have certainly sent inquiries both to my Hostel and to the *Record* office. That's chiefly why I want to have my poor character restored. Everyone says, 'Of course, Miss Frensham, nobody would think for a moment——' But what else are they to think privately? The thing has gone and I am branded as the last to handle it."

"Yes, yes," said Carrados, beginning to walk about the room and to touch one familiar object after another in his curiously unhesitating way. "That unfortunate 'last' has obsessed you and all the others until it has shut out every real consideration. Your account of the whole business—quite clear so far as it goes—is entirely based on the fact that you were the last, and the auctioneer was told you were the last, and all the others grasped it, and you all proceeded to revolve round that centre. There stands the man we want, as plain as a pikestaff for us, only you and your lastness get between so persistently that we cannot see him."



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"I'm very sorry," faltered Miss Frensham, rather taken aback.

"That's all right, my dear young lady," said an entirely benevolent Carrados. "We are getting on very nicely on the whole, and soon you will begin to tell me the things I really want to know."

"Indeed I will tell you anything," she protested.

"Of course you will—as soon as I have the gumption to ask. In the meantime what do you really think of the celebrated Petition Crown now that you've seen it?"

This light conversational opening struck Miss Frensham as rather an unpropitious way of grappling with the problem of the theft, but she had just professed her general willingness.

"Well," she replied with conscientious effort, "it chiefly struck me as rather absurd that people should be willing to pay so much for this one when other coins, apparently almost like it, could be had for a few shillings."

"Yes; very true." The blind man appeared to consider this naïve expression deeply. "As a collector myself, of course that goes home. You are not a collector, in any sense, Miss Frensham?"

"No, indeed."

"I was wondering," speculated Carrados in the same idle vein, "how you happened to know that."

"Oh, very simply. There were about a dozen other lots in the drawer the man put before me. One of them consisted of quite a number of crown pieces, and they struck me as being so like the Petition Crown at a glance that out of curiosity I compared them. When it came to the sale they made only a few pounds for the lot."

"You compared them—side by side?"

"Yes. I—I . . ." As she spoke Miss Frensham suddenly went very white, half rose from her chair, and sat down again. The charming voice trailed off into a gasp.

"You remember something now? You—possibly—changed them somehow?"

"*I did!* I see it all. I remember exactly how it went. What a dreadful thing!"

"Tell me what happened."

"I was waiting for the attendant to turn so that I could tell

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him I had finished. It was then that I took up these two coins—the Petition Crown and one from another box—to compare. There was a man near me who had seemed to be watching—at least I thought so—and just then I looked up and caught his eyes on me. I suppose it made me nervous; anyway I dropped one of the crowns back into the drawer. It made a great clatter as it fell among the others and I felt that it would be almost a crime there to knock a coin like that. I just slipped the other into its place and pushed the drawer away as the attendant turned. And now I see as clearly as can be that I returned them wrong.”

“That is our real starting-point,” said Carrados happily. “Now we can proceed.”

“But it must have been found out. All the sold lots were looked over again.”

“Oh, yes; it must have been found out. But exactly when? The man who was observing you—did you hear his name?”

“No.”

“Where did he sit during the sale?”

“He sat—yes, that’s rather curious. You remember that after talking to the auctioneer I went and sat down away from the table? Well, when the selling was going on again this man kept hovering round. Presently he bent down to me and said, ‘Excuse me, but you have taken my seat.’ ‘What on earth do you mean?’ I retorted, for it was just at the time that I was feeling exasperated. ‘There was nothing on the chair, and there are a dozen others there,’ and I pointed to the whole empty row. Then he said, ‘Oh, I beg your pardon,’ and went and sat down on another.”

“Isn’t it splendid!” exclaimed Carrados in one of his rare bursts of enthusiasm. “No sooner have we got rid of you and the attendant as the only culprits than we find the real man absolutely fighting to make himself known—doing everything he can to attract our attention—struggling like a chicken emerging from its shell. Soon you will tell me that you found his hand on the back of your chair.”

“Oh!” cried Miss Frensham in sharp surprise. “How can you possibly know that?”

“I did not; but it was worth while suggesting to you.”

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"It's absolutely true. I certainly shouldn't have thought it worth while mentioning, but just at the end of the sale, when everyone got up, he passed behind me, and stopping, he put his hand—rather gratuitously, it seemed—on my chair and asked me if I had heard what the last lot made. I said that I wasn't taking the least notice, and he went away. What does it mean?"

"At the moment it means that we must telephone to Lang's to keep the stable door locked—don't put your trust in proverbs, Miss Frensham. And there are a few questions I want them to have settled before I call there."

"I dare say I'm an idiot," said the lady frankly, "but I'm beginning to get rather excited. Isn't there anything that I can do to help?"

"Why, yes." He smiled with friendly understanding. "Make out the list for me. We need the catalogue—it's over there. Now which was the lot of crowns you compared with?"

"This one—No. 56," she replied, after studying the pages.

"'Charles II, Crowns, various dates, in fine condition generally, 7.'"

"That's sufficient. You have your pad? Now write:

Confidential. Please ascertain:

- (1) Who bought Lot 56?
- (2) What man, if any, left the sale-room about one o'clock and returned before Lot 56 was sold?
- (3) What man, if any, returned after the sale for something he had left in the room?

"Of course——" he seemed to apologize—"that gives away the whole show to you."

"Ye-es," replied Miss Frensham dutifully.

Mr. Carrados insisted on his visitor remaining to lunch. He even arranged that no one else should be present on the occasion, and the guest, justly annoyed at this characteristic masculine act of delicacy, repaid him by discovering the appetite of the proverbial fairy. The ghosts of three slabs of bread and butter stood between her and that generous table; and, reflecting on that, the whimsical maiden sought her own means to dispel the spectre.

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"It is really my fault that the coin has gone," she found occasion to remark. "Almost as much as though I had taken it. If it never turns up again I can't be satisfied until I have made it good."

Carrados was naturally horrified. Was she mad? Had she forgotten its record?

"My dear young lady, don't be romantic. The coin is insured or ought to be. Why, it would cripple you for years—for ever."

"Oh, no," she retorted airily. "We all expect to make our fortunes. And I really have some money that I don't use."

"Yes?" he smiled, and in the character of her intimate adviser the words slipped out: "How much?"

"Well," she considered with deliberate effect, "I think it varies. . . . But"—with devastating clearness—"it is somewhere about three thousand pounds a year."

"I beg your pardon?" stammered Carrados. "No, no; don't say it again. I heard perfectly. I see. I understand. You ran away from it?"

"I ran away—if you call it running away—from several things. If you could see me, Mr. Carrados, you would understand that I am endowed with an almost supernatural plainness. It is too obvious even for the glass to conceal from me. At school, where politeness is not one of the compulsory subjects, I was 'Pup,' 'Puggy,' 'Ki-ki,' 'Balcombe Beauty,' 'Snarley-wow,' and other shafts of endearment. I was not petted. Even my mother found it a little trying. . . . And yet as I grew up I learned that I could be astonishingly popular with most men. The things I said were witty, the things I did were clever, my taste was exquisite, and they were all prepared to marry me. . . . But when I happened to wander into the society of strange men who had missed hearing of my pecuniary worth, my word! No one noticed that I hadn't a seat, no one thought of asking me to dance, to sing, to skate. They didn't see me. And if I opened my mouth they very rarely even heard me. And then if a really pretty girl happened to come into the circle! What an instant preening up of the fishy-eyed old men and a strutting round of the bored-to-death young ones! They didn't even take the trouble to hide anything from me: I might have

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been a man, too. I could watch them licking their lips and arranging their attractions. O-oh! Do you wonder that I went sick? There was a man my father wanted me to marry; well, at all events a decent sort of male, it seemed. I was beginning to think that I might as well when *that* came out. No, it doesn't really matter what. My father thought it needn't make any difference! Mother assured me that it was nicer not to notice these things! When I said that it made all the difference and that I had already noticed a great many things and that I was going away out into the world to see if it was the same everywhere and meant to begin by earning my own living, of course I raised a tremendous storm. Then—if I must go—they wanted to arrange things for me, so that everything should be quite nice. But they'd been arranging for me all my life and that was just what I wanted to disarrange. In the end I got my way—you see, I was in rather a strong position—subject to certain conditions. Father stipulated that I didn't get into any 'damned mess,' or back I should have to go. Mother hoped that her girlie would remain unspotted from the world. So here I am. And that's the whole story, Mr. Carrados, and the reason why I'm so anxious to keep out of what I am sure my father would call a—ahem—mess."

"Poor Louis!" thought his friend. Then aloud, "And is human nature entirely transformed by the five-mile radius, Miss Frensham?"

"No," she admitted seriously. "But at least I know exactly where I am. There is no competition to carry my parcel or to run my errands—I hope I haven't given the impression that I want it?—but if anything I do does happen to get praised I can believe it honest; if I make a friend I can really feel that it is for myself. . . . I am no longer as I heard of one 'admirer' dubbing me, 'The Girl with the Golden Mug.' "

Both laughed. Then he grew almost pensive.

"After laughing at that let me say something," he ventured at length. "When you needn't fear having to meet a man's eyes ever, he may be privileged to an unusual frankness . . . Think as little of looks as you do of lucre, Miss Frensham. I can know nothing of the features you so dispraise: to me you would always be the girl with the golden voice. I am sure that some-

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one else will see you—as you think you are—as little as I do, and to him you will always be the girl with the golden heart.”

“You kind man!” she responded. “Well . . . perhaps there is!”

When Carrados got down to Lang & Lang’s a few hours later he found that the seller on the previous day had been Mr. Travis, a gentleman to whom he was by no means a stranger.

“Very glad to have your suggestions, of course, Carrados,” remarked Mr. Travis graciously. “Are you looking into it on Lord Willington’s behalf? Miss Frensham’s! You don’t say so!”

“I have a weakness for being on the winning side,” remarked the blind man.

“Well, as to that, I don’t know that it’s exactly a case of a winning side or a losing side. Unless you call us the losing side, egad! This is the room. You want to look—to go round it?”

“I should like to. One never knows.”

“Oh, we’ve been thoroughly over it this morning. Heaven knows what we could expect, but it seemed the natural thing to do. Yes, it’s still being kept locked, since you asked.”

“Anyone wanting to go in for anything?”

“No—only Mr. Marrabel, who called for his gloves after the sale; they’d been taken to the office though.”

“Marrabel!” thought the patient worker in the dark. “Yes, of course—Marrabel the dilettante.”

“And, by the way, that reminds me,” continued Mr. Travis. “Oh, yes, sit anywhere you like. That list you sent through. You’re not going to suspect Marrabel of any connection? Because, strangely enough, his name is the answer to each of your inquiries.”

“I should scarcely describe it as a case for suspicion,” replied Carrados. “Still, one thinks of everyone.”

“We can eliminate Mr. Marrabel at all events, I think. He did not look at any of the lots yesterday. He only bought No. 56, and both Muir and I noticed that he did not touch the coins when he got them—just put them on an empty chair by his side until the hue-and-cry was raised, and then he passed the box over to the table for someone to verify—all there and the correct number.”

“Very convincing,” assented Carrados.

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"I mean it rather shows that there isn't much to be gained by looking for so-called 'clues' at this end, don't you think? Marrabel is a case in point. Of course we shall be delighted to put any information or facilities that we may have at your disposal, Carrados, both out of consideration for yourself and as due to your client. But what *we* chiefly want is to get the coin back. And the people we have put on to it seem to be extending themselves in that direction. By to-morrow every curio-dealer, pawn-broker, and leading collector will be on the look-out. America will be notified, for they think that the coin may be quite likely offered there. A reward is being offered to make it worth anybody's while. In the next number of the *Bric-à-brac Collector* there will be an ingenuous advertisement from a wealthy colonial anxious to buy rare milled silver coins; don't be deceived by it."

"I won't," promised Mr. Carrados. "But all this must come rather expensive."

"Doubtless it is. But the fact is, since the thing has gone, Willington's people are persuading themselves that it might have made a fantastic price. That is why we are so anxious to get it back again."

"Oh!" Polite unconcern was Carrados' note. He seldom denied himself these rare moments when, perhaps a week's patient labour ran down to a needle-point. "Of course I'm more interested in my client. But as the coin is all you want—why, here it is!"

"What—what's—that?" articulated Mr. Travis.

"The Petition Crown," replied the arch-humbug, continuing to hold out his hand. "Delighted to be the means of restoring it to you, Travis."

"It is the Petition Crown," murmured Travis. "Good God! You brought it?"

"On the contrary, I found it here."

"Found it? Where?"

"Beneath the seat of this chair."

"You knew that it was there? Do you mean that Miss Frensham told you?"

"I knew that it should be here, and Miss Frensham certainly told me."

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"She hid it there?"

"Not at all. She did not know that it was here. She told me where it was, but she did not know that she was telling me."

"Then I'm hanged if I understand," complained Mr. Travis. "Can't you be human once in a way, Carrados? Damn it all, man, we went to school together!"

"Sit down," said Carrados, "and I'll be as human as you like. . . . Did you ever commit a crime, Travis?"

"Not really," confessed the auctioneer with admirable *sang-froid*. "I robbed an orchard when I was ten, but that——"

"Robbing orchards at ten scarcely counts, does it? Well, I have the advantage because there is no form of villainy that I haven't gone through in all its phases. Theoretically, of course, but so far as working out the details is concerned and preparing for emergencies, efficiently and with craftsmanlike pride. Whenever I fail to get to sleep at night—rather frequently, I'm sorry to say—I commit a murder, forgery, a robbery, or whatnot, with all its ramifications. It's much more soothing than counting sheep and it never fails to get me off. The point is, that the criminal mind is rarely original, and I find that in nine cases out of ten that sort of crime is committed exactly as I have already done it. Being a collector myself, of course, I've robbed coin auctions frequently. I know precisely how it should be done and what is to be avoided. Marrabel did the correct things, but he overlooked the contingency of someone else also thinking of them."

"But Marrabel, my dear fellow! He must be almost in Debrett. Think!"

"Oh, yes. But he makes a specialty of getting choice things for nothing, provided there is no risk."

"And is there no risk here?"

"None at all; practically none if he's content to take his loss. But is he? We shall see. However, this is what has happened so far:

"Miss Frensham started the business by mixing Lots 56 and 64 without knowing it at the time. She had come to get a newspaper par out of the sale if she could, and was taking an intelligent interest in the subject when she happened to catch Marrabel overlooking her. Well, being nervy and rather



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touchy, she dropped the Petition Crown on to the other Crowns in Lot 56 and put the one from that lot into box No. 64.

"Marrabel evidently grasped that. It might prove a golden opportunity. Doubtless he took five minutes to consider the position. Then he hied him off to his Mayfair flat and returned with an appropriate coin in his pocket, well in time to purchase Lot 56. What did it cost him?"

"Three-fifteen," said Mr. Travis.

"You know well enough, Travis, that although a single-coin lot is generally taken up by someone as it goes round the table, half a dozen coins, like Lot 56, are seldom touched. At the most they are glanced at. When Muir turned them out on to his tray, what had been at the top naturally got hidden. When he returned them to the box, to hand over to the buyer, the Petition Crown perhaps came to the top again. Marrabel, seated in an unusually retiring position, doubtless received his booty with an appropriate gesture of unconcern and laid it carelessly on the next chair. Good, no risk so far.

"He had at least four minutes in which to act. You and Muir thought he paid no attention to the purchase because he didn't hold the box and examine the contents. Quite naturally; but of course you weren't actually watching him and he was out to mask his movements. All in good time the exchange was made. But now the element of risk came in: he had the thing in his possession.

"Your amateur is always self-conscious. Marrabel could have walked off then, but that would certainly have put him in an equivocal position. Yet supposing it came to being searched? And Miss Frensham, you may remember, did throw out the suggestion. Whether he had reconnoitred in advance we need not speculate; but here beneath his chair, without moving, Marrabel found an ideal crevice for his loot; tight, hidden, accessible.

"He could now move away from the dangerous spot, and he did when the chase began, putting his purchase on the table with a fine indifference for someone else to verify. He stayed away from this chair so long that a curious thing occurred. Miss Frensham took it.

"In one way Marrabel was now on velvet. The leading

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suspect had drawn a red herring across his tracks, for if by any chance the crown should come to light here Miss Frensham was hopelessly involved. Then presently the situation eased; the sale was coming to an end and there was no suggestion now of search or of anyone being detained. His only desire was to recover the coin and to get away. But the lady seemed set here, and Marrabel, ignorant of her intentions, made his first bad move. He claimed the chair, fully expecting to be given it at once.

"As it happened Miss Frensham didn't budge. She is far from being an ordinary meek young person, and the immediate events hadn't gone to soothe her. She was sitting there quietly writing, and, taken on the surface, it was sheerly an impertinence on the man's part. She had had occasion to notice Marrabel already. In strictly feminine terms she told him to go to the devil, and Marrabel, now beginning to feel jerky, veered off.

"The sale comes to an end. Everyone begins to go. Is Marrabel to hang about aimlessly until this chair is vacant and then deliberately come and sit here for no obvious reason? The man's tightened nerves won't hear of it. Act naturally and there is no risk at all. Return later—to-morrow, next week, it doesn't matter, the coin is snugly waiting. And then, good heavens! the thing flashes on him. The chairs are all alike! Next week, to-morrow, even after the sale they may be rearranged, moved, taken to another room, and he will have to go sitting on one after another, an object for all to marvel at. What's to be done? Why plainly to mark the chair before it is too late, and here, Travis, under my fingers, is the cross that our man broke his pencil on."

"Very ingenious," admitted Mr. Travis, "and in the face of this evidence"—delicately balancing the recovered crown upon a fingertip—"it would be mean to argue. But, you know, Carrados, Miss Frensham *did* sit here last."

"Inflexible man!" replied Carrados. "Well, when is your next sale?"

"Friday—enamels. On view for one day only."

"So much the better. You can have it in here? Keep it closed till then and I will be here early. And just make sure that Marrabel is sent his catalogue, won't you?"

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There was nothing at all unusual to be noticed about the sale-rooms on Thursday morning, and Mr. Marrabel strolled round in perfect composure. With praiseworthy restraint he had not hastened there, and the group of conspirators in the private office had to amuse themselves as best they could for at least two hours.

Marrabel was interested in enamels, as he was in all precious things, and he wandered from point to point consulting his catalogue, examining a piece and marking a price as he had done a score of times before—as everyone else was doing then. Finally he sat down to review his list: nothing could be more natural. Satisfied, he rose to go.

Outside the room an attendant came across to speak to him: the signal had been passed.

"Do you mind stepping into Mr. Travis' office, sir? I think he wants to see you about something."

The message was polite and not wholly unusual, but Marrabel's throat went dry.

"Not now," he said, quickening his step. "I have an important—Back in half an hour, tell him."

It was too late for that easy manoeuvre to carry. Across the hall there was another form between him and the outer door. Nor did the first one obligingly retire.

"Beg pardon, sir, but I understand it's rather particular, sir."

Then Marrabel must have known that something had miscarried.

"Oh, curse it, all right," he snapped and, watched at every step, he went.

"It's about the Petition Crown that disappeared at the last coin sale." The urbane Travis never had a less relished job. "We have received certain information and we may have to take proceedings. Do you wish to make any statement?"

Marrabel had dimly foreseen this possibility and he had given some thought to a satisfactory explanation, but in the end he had left it to be decided by the circumstances of the moment, because there was no perfectly satisfactory explanation to be thought of.

"Well," he said, affecting a light laugh, "that's an unnecessarily brutal way of putting it, because, as a matter of fact, I

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was bringing the crown to return to you, and I have it in my pocket at the moment. It was only this morning I discovered it when I came to look into that lot I bought. How it got there and how it came to be missed by the dolts who looked I can't say. Personally I didn't examine one of the coins until to-day."

"I see," remarked Mr. Travis. "But I understand that you were leaving the place just now?"

"You understand quite right. I intended handing you the crown but when I got here and realized how cursed unpleasant it might be I funked it. I decided to send the damned thing back by post without a word."

"At all events you have it for us now?"

"Yes, here it is," and Marrabel took a coin from his pocket with alacrity, and laying it on the desk turned hopefully to go.

"Thanks, but—one moment—what is this?"

The unhappy man looked at the coin he had just produced and turned paler than before.

"I must have picked up the wrong one," he muttered, beginning to recognize the hopeless morass he was floundering into.

"Look again," said a quiet voice as Mr. Carrados appeared on the scene. "Look closer at the coin you brought from your room this morning!"

"You blind devil!" Lightly scratched on the surface of the silver he found the signature *Max Carrados* and the date of that very day. "This is your doing all through!"

"If it is, it is only to show up a scoundrel. You didn't stick at getting two innocent people suspected by your scheme. Let them see you now."

As if worked by machinery an inner door fell open and Miss Frensham and Muir walked in and stood silently regarding him.

"At the sale," continued Carrados pitilessly, "you were both publicly put in a position of some suspicion by the disappearance of a coin. It is right that you should now know that it was deliberately stolen by Mr. Marrabel here. He is the thief and your perfect innocence is established."

"Well, curse it all, it wasn't entirely my fault," snarled Marrabel. "I only accepted what was given me."

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"That will be for a judge and jury to assess. You'll give him in charge now, Travis?"

At this prospect Marrabel's last vestige of pretence broke down. All the poltroonery in the man came to the surface with a rush.

"For God's sake, don't do that, Travis," he cried, clutching him by the sleeve. "I'll do anything you wish—confess anything you like—only don't have me sent to prison. I'll put all sorts of things your way, and I know crowds of people. Heavens! man, consider what it would mean to me—one of your own class."

"What shall we do, Carrados? We never like to prosecute."

"I know you don't," replied the blind man. "I've already drawn up his confession. Read this and then sign it, Mr. Marrabel, and we will all be witnesses of the spontaneous act of reparation on your part."

"What are you going to do with it?" asked the unfortunate wretch.

"Keep it as a guarantee of future good behaviour, and to vindicate these others if the necessity occurs. And you needn't think of having me knifed to get it back again, because I shan't carry it in my pocket-book."

Marrabel slowly signed and then stabbed the polished desk with the pen he held in a gust of passion that left his fingers pierced and bleeding.

"I'd go willingly to hell if I could first see you skinned alive, Carrados," he said as he turned to leave.

"I am sure you would," retorted Max Carrados pleasantly. "But I don't think that anything to do with me need affect your destination. Now go."

This did not happen last year nor yet the year before. Miss Frensham married her sub-editor, and their children—now old enough to go to school—frequently take prizes at quite important beauty competitions. Mr. Marrabel almost immediately left these inhospitable shores, and after a seemly interval appeared in flourishing conditions in New York. Not that American connoisseurs know less than English ones do, but they know less of Mr. Marrabel.

# THE DRAGON'S HEAD

BY

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

*from Lord Peter Views the Body*

LORD PETER WIMSEY SOLVES A BOOK-COLLECTING MYSTERY

*Just as Max Carrados is an expert coin collector, so Lord Peter Wimsey indulges himself in his hobby of book collecting. And so, like Carrados, Lord Peter is peculiarly fitted for the task of solving the book-collecting mystery in The Dragon's Head. (The ineffable Peter's admirers should know that he is "author" of Notes on the Collecting of Incunabula, 1920) . . . There have been many good stories of crime and detection which involve book collecting. See the following: Lawrence G. Blochman's The Aldine Folio Murders (published in The Dolphin, never in book form); Gelett Burgess' The Stolen Shakespeare (from The Master of Mysteries, 1912) about seer-detective Astro; Ernest Bramah's The Virginiola Fraud (from The Eyes of Max Carrados), about detective Max Carrados; Samuel Hopkins Adams' The Man Who Spoke Latin (from Average Jones), about detective Average Jones; and Vincent Starrett's The Unique Hamlet, the outstanding pastiche of Sherlock Holmes.*

"Uncle Peter!"

"Half a jiff, Gherkins. No, I don't think I'll take the Catullus, Mr. Ffolliott. After all, thirteen guineas is a bit steep without either the title or the last folio, what? But you might send me round the Vitruvius and the Satyricon when they come in; I'd like to have a look at them, anyhow. Well, old man, what is it?"

"Do come and look at these pictures, Uncle Peter. I'm sure it's an awfully old book."

Lord Peter Wimsey sighed as he picked his way out of Mr. Ffolliott's dark back shop, strewn with the flotsam and jetsam of many libraries. An unexpected outbreak of measles at Mr. Bultridge's excellent preparatory school, coinciding with the

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absence of the Duke and Duchess of Denver on the Continent, had saddled his lordship with his ten-year-old nephew, Viscount St. George, more commonly known as Young Jerry, Jerrykins, or Pickled Gherkins. Lord Peter was not one of those born uncles who delight old nurses by their fascinating "way with" children. He succeeded, however, in earning tolerance on honourable terms by treating the young with the same scrupulous politeness which he extended to their elders. He therefore prepared to receive Gherkins' discovery with respect, though a child's taste was not to be trusted, and the book might quite well be some horror of woolly mezzotints or an inferior modern reprint adorned with leprous electros. Nothing much better was really to be expected from the "cheap shelf" exposed to the dust of the street.

"Uncle! There's such a funny man here, with a great long nose and ears and a tail and dogs' heads all over his body. *Monstrum hoc Cracoviæ*—that's a monster, isn't it? I should jolly well think it was. What's *Cracoviæ*, Uncle Peter?"

"Oh," said Lord Peter, greatly relieved, "the Cracow monster?" A portrait of that distressing infant certainly argued a respectable antiquity. "Let's have a look. Quite right, it's a very old book—Münster's *Cosmographia universalis*. I'm glad you know good stuff when you see it, Gherkins. What's the *Cosmographia* doing out here, Mr. Ffolliott, at five bob?"

"Well, my lord," said the bookseller, who had followed his customers to the door, "it's in a very bad state, you see; covers loose and nearly all the double-page maps missing. It came in a few weeks ago—dumped in with a collection we bought from a gentleman in Norfolk—you'll find his name in it—Dr. Conyers of Yelsall Manor. Of course, we might keep it and try to make up a complete copy when we get another example. But it's rather out of our line, as you know, classical authors being our speciality. So we just put it out to go for what it would fetch in the *status quo*, as you might say."

"Oh, look!" broke in Gherkins. "Here's a picture of a man being chopped up in little bits. What does it say about it?"

"I thought you could read Latin."

"Well, but it's all full of sort of pothooks. What do they mean?"

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"They're just contractions," said Lord Peter patiently. " '*Solent quoque hujus insulæ cultores*'—It is the custom of the dwellers in this island, when they see their parents stricken in years and of no further use, to take them down into the market place and sell them to the cannibals, who kill them and eat them for food. This they do also with younger persons when they fall into any desperate sickness."

"Ha, ha!" said Mr. Ffolliott. "Rather sharp practice on the poor cannibals. They never got anything but tough old joints or diseased meat, eh?"

"The inhabitants seem to have had thoroughly advanced notions of business," agreed his lordship.

The viscount was enthralled.

"I *do* like this book," he said; "could I buy it out of my pocket-money, please?"

"Another problem for uncles," thought Lord Peter, rapidly ransacking his recollections of the *Cosmographia* to determine whether any of its illustrations were indelicate; for he knew the duchess to be strait-laced. On consideration, he could only remember one that was dubious, and there was a sporting chance that the duchess might fail to light upon it.

"Well," he said judicially, "in your place, Gherkins, I should be inclined to buy it. It's in a bad state, as Mr. Ffolliott has honourably told you—otherwise, of course, it would be exceedingly valuable; but, apart from the lost pages, it's a very nice clean copy, and certainly worth five shillings to you, if you think of starting a collection."

Till that moment, the viscount had obviously been more impressed by the cannibals than by the state of the margins, but the idea of figuring next term at Mr. Bultridge's as a collector of rare editions had undeniable charm.

"None of the other fellows collect books," he said; "they collect stamps, mostly. I think stamps are rather ordinary, don't you, Uncle Peter? I was rather thinking of giving up stamps. Mr. Porter, who takes us for history, has got a lot of books like yours, and he is a splendid man at footer."

Rightly interpreting this reference to Mr. Porter, Lord Peter gave it as his opinion that book collecting could be a perfectly manly pursuit. Girls, he said, practically never took it up,



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because it meant so much learning about dates and type faces and other technicalities which called for a masculine brain.

"Besides," he added, "it's a very interesting book in itself, you know. Well worth dipping into."

"I'll take it, please," said the viscount, blushing a little at transacting so important and expensive a piece of business; for the duchess did not encourage lavish spending by little boys, and was strict in the matter of allowances.

Mr. Ffolliott bowed, and took the *Cosmographia* away to wrap it up.

"Are you all right for cash?" enquired Lord Peter discreetly. "Or can I be of temporary assistance?"

"No, thank you, Uncle; I've got Aunt Mary's half-crown and four shillings of my pocket-money, because, you see, with the measles happening, we didn't have our dormitory spread, and I was saving up for that."

The business being settled in this gentlemanly manner, and the budding bibliophile taking personal and immediate charge of the stout, square volume, a taxi was chartered which, in due course of traffic delays, brought the *Cosmographia* to 110A Piccadilly.

"And who, Bunter, is Mr. Wilberforce Pope?"

"I do not think we know the gentleman, my lord. He is asking to see your lordship for a few minutes on business."

"He probably wants me to find a lost dog for his maiden aunt. What it is to have acquired a reputation as a sleuth! Show him in. Gherkins, if this good gentleman's business turns out to be private, you'd better retire into the dining-room."

"Yes, Uncle Peter," said the viscount dutifully. He was extended on his stomach on the library hearthrug, laboriously picking his way through the more exciting-looking bits of the *Cosmographia*, with the aid of Messrs. Lewis & Short, whose monumental compilation he had hitherto looked upon as a barbarous invention for the annoyance of upper forms.

Mr. Wilberforce Pope turned out to be a rather plump, fair gentleman in the late thirties, with a prematurely bald forehead, horn-rimmed spectacles, and an engaging manner.

"You will excuse my intrusion, won't you?" he began.

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"I'm sure you must think me a terrible nuisance. But I wormed your name and address out of Mr. Ffolliott. Not his fault, really. You won't blame him, will you? I positively badgered the poor man. Sat down on his doorstep and refused to go, though the boy was putting up the shutters. I'm afraid you will think me very silly when you know what it's all about. But you really mustn't hold poor Mr. Ffolliott responsible, now, will you?"

"Not at all," said his lordship. "I mean, I'm charmed and all that sort of thing. Something I can do for you about books? You're a collector, perhaps? Will you have a drink of anything?"

"Well, no," said Mr. Pope, with a faint giggle. "No, not exactly a collector. Thank you very much, just a spot—no, no, literally a spot. Thank you; no"—he glanced round the bookshelves, with their rows of rich old leather bindings—"certainly not a collector. But I happen to be—er, interested—sentimentally interested—in a purchase you made yesterday. Really, such a very small matter. You will think it foolish. But I am told you are the present owner of a copy of Münster's *Cosmographia*, which used to belong to my uncle, Dr. Conyers."

Gherkins looked up suddenly, seeing that the conversation had a personal interest for him.

"Well, that's not quite correct," said Wimsey. "I was there at the time, but the actual purchaser is my nephew. Gerald, Mr. Pope is interested in your *Cosmographia*. My nephew, Lord St. George."

"How do you do, young man," said Mr. Pope affably. "I see that the collecting spirit runs in the family. A great Latin scholar, too, I expect, eh? Ready to decline *jusjurandum* with the best of us? Ha, ha! And what are you going to do when you grow up? Be Lord Chancellor, eh? Now, I bet you think you'd rather be an engine-driver, what, what?"

"No, thank you," said the viscount, with aloofness.

"What, not an engine-driver? Well, now, I want you to be a real business man this time. Put through a book deal, you know. Your uncle will see I offer you a fair price, what? Ha, ha! Now, you see, that picture-book of yours has a great value for me that it wouldn't have for anybody else. When I was a

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little boy of your age it was one of my very greatest joys. I used to have it to look at on Sundays. Ah, dear! the happy hours I used to spend with those quaint old engravings, and the funny old maps with the ships and salamanders and '*Hic dracones*'—you know what *that* means, I dare say. What does it mean?"

"Here are dragons," said the viscount, unwillingly but still politely.

"Quite right. I *knew* you were a scholar."

"It's a very attractive book," said Lord Peter. "My nephew was quite entranced by the famous Cracow monster."

"Ah yes—a glorious monster, isn't it?" agreed Mr. Pope, with enthusiasm. "Many's the time I've fancied myself as Sir Lancelot or somebody on a white war horse, charging that monster, lance in rest, with the captive princess cheering me on. Ah! Childhood! You're living the happiest days of your life, young man. You won't believe me, but you are."

"Now what is it exactly you want my nephew to do?" enquired Lord Peter a little sharply.

"Quite right, quite right. Well now, you know, my uncle, Dr. Conyers, sold his library a few months ago. I was abroad at the time, and it was only yesterday, when I went down to Yelsall on a visit, that I learnt the dear old book had gone with the rest. I can't tell you how distressed I was. I know it's not valuable—a great many pages missing and all that—but I can't bear to think of its being gone. So, purely from sentimental reasons, as I said, I hurried off to Ffolliott's to see if I could get it back. I was quite upset to find I was too late, and gave poor Mr. Ffolliott no peace till he told me the name of the purchaser. Now, you see, Lord St. George, I'm here to make you an offer for the book. Come, now, double what you gave for it. That's a good offer, isn't it, Lord Peter? Ha, ha! And you will be doing me a very great kindness as well."

Viscount St. George looked rather distressed, and turned appealingly to his uncle.

"Well, Gerald," said Lord Peter, "it's your affair you know. What do you say?"

The viscount stood first on one leg and then on the other. The career of a book collector evidently had its problems, like other careers.

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"If you please, Uncle Peter," he said, with embarrassment, "may I whisper?"

"It's not usually considered the thing to whisper, Gherkins, but you could ask Mr. Pope for time to consider his offer. Or you could say you would prefer to consult me first. That would be quite in order."

"Then, if you don't mind, Mr. Pope, I should like to consult my uncle first."

"Certainly, certainly; ha, ha!" said Mr. Pope. "Very prudent to consult a collector of greater experience, what? Ah! The younger generation, eh, Lord Peter? Regular little business men already."

"Excuse us, then, for one moment," said Lord Peter, and drew his nephew into the dining-room.

"I say, Uncle Peter," said the collector breathlessly, when the door was shut, "*need* I give him my book? I don't think he's a very nice man. I *hate* people who ask you to decline nouns for them."

"Certainly you needn't, Gherkins, if you don't want to. The book is yours, and you've a right to it."

"What would *you* do, Uncle?"

Before replying, Lord Peter, in the most surprising manner, tiptoed gently to the door which communicated with the library and flung it suddenly open, in time to catch Mr. Pope kneeling on the hearthrug intently turning over the pages of the coveted volume, which lay as the owner had left it. He started to his feet in a flurried manner as the door opened.

"Do help yourself, Mr. Pope, won't you?" cried Lord Peter hospitably, and closed the door again.

"What is it, Uncle Peter?"

"If you want my advice, Gherkins, I should be rather careful how you had any dealings with Mr. Pope. I don't think he's telling the truth. He called those woodcuts engravings—though, of course, that may be just his ignorance. But I can't believe that he spent all his childhood's Sunday afternoons studying those maps and picking out the dragons in them, because, as you may have noticed for yourself, old Münster put very few dragons into his maps. They're mostly just plain maps—a bit queer to our ideas of geography, but perfectly

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straightforward. That was why I brought in the Cracow monster, and, you see, he thought it was some sort of dragon."

"Oh, I say, Uncle! So you said that on purpose!"

"If Mr. Pope wants the *Cosmographia*, it's for some reason he doesn't want to tell us about. And, that being so, I wouldn't be in too big a hurry to sell, if the book were mine. See?"

"Do you mean there's something frightfully valuable about the book, which we don't know?"

"Possibly."

"How exciting! It's just like a story in the 'Boys' Friend Library'. What am I to say to him, Uncle?"

"Well, in your place I wouldn't be dramatic or anything. I'd just say you've considered the matter, and you've taken a fancy to the book and have decided not to sell. You thank him for his offer, of course."

"Yes—er, won't you say it for me, Uncle?"

"I think it would look better if you did it yourself."

"Yes, perhaps it would. Will he be very cross?"

"Possibly," said Lord Peter, "but, if he is, he won't let on. Ready?"

The consulting committee accordingly returned to the library. Mr. Pope had prudently retired from the hearthrug and was examining a distant bookcase.

"Thank you very much for your offer, Mr. Pope," said the viscount, striding stoutly up to him, "but I have considered it, and I have taken a—a—a fancy for the book and decided not to sell."

"Sorry and all that," put in Lord Peter, "but my nephew's adamant about it. No, it isn't the price; he wants the book. Wish I could oblige you, but it isn't in my hands. Won't you take something else before you go? Really? Ring the bell, Gherkins. My man will see you to the lift. *Good evening.*"

When the visitor had gone, Lord Peter returned and thoughtfully picked up the book.

"We were awful idiots to leave him with it, Gherkins, even for a moment. Luckily, there's no harm done."

"You don't think he found out anything while we were away, do you, Uncle?" gasped Gherkins, open-eyed.

"I'm sure he didn't."

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"Why?"

"He offered me fifty pounds for it on the way to the door. Gave the game away. H'm! Bunter."

"My lord?"

"Put this book in the safe and bring me back the keys. And you'd better set all the burglar alarms when you lock up."

"Oo—er!" said Viscount St. George.

On the third morning after the visit of Mr. Wilberforce Pope, the viscount was seated at a very late breakfast in his uncle's flat, after the most glorious and soul-satisfying night that ever boy experienced. He was almost too excited to eat the kidneys and bacon placed before him by Bunter, whose usual impeccable manner was not in the least impaired by a rapidly swelling and blackening eye.

It was about two in the morning that Gherkins—who had not slept very well, owing to too lavish and grown-up a dinner and theatre the evening before—became aware of a stealthy sound somewhere in the direction of the fire-escape. He had got out of bed and crept very softly into Lord Peter's room and wakened him up. He had said: "Uncle Peter, I'm sure there's burglars on the fire-escape." And Uncle Peter, instead of saying, "Nonsense, Gherkins, hurry up and get back to bed," had sat up and listened and said: "By jove, Gherkins, I believe you're right." And had sent Gherkins to call Bunter. And on his return, Gherkins, who had always regarded his uncle as a very top-hatted sort of person, actually saw him take from his handkerchief drawer an undeniable automatic pistol.

It was at this point that Lord Peter was apotheosed from the state of Quite Decent Uncle to that of Glorified Uncle. He said:

"Look here, Gherkins, we don't know how many of these blighters there'll be, so you must be jolly smart and do anything I say sharp, on the word of command—even if I have to say 'Scoot.' Promise?"

Gherkins promised, with his heart thumping, and they sat waiting in the dark, till suddenly a little electric bell rang sharply just over the head of Lord Peter's bed and a green light shone out.

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"The library window," said his lordship, promptly silencing the bell by turning a switch. "If they heard, they may think better of it. We'll give them a few minutes."

They gave them five minutes, and then crept very quietly down the passage.

"Go round by the dining-room, Bunter," said his lordship. "They may bolt that way."

With infinite precaution, he unlocked and opened the library door, and Gherkins noticed how silently the locks moved.

A circle of light from an electric torch was moving slowly along the bookshelves. The burglars had obviously heard nothing of the counter-attack. Indeed, they seemed to have troubles enough of their own to keep their attention occupied. As his eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, Gherkins made out that one man was standing holding the torch, while the other took down and examined the books. It was fascinating to watch his apparently disembodied hands move along the shelves in the torch-light.

The men muttered discontentedly. Obviously the job was proving a harder one than they had bargained for. The habit of ancient authors of abbreviating the titles on the backs of their volumes, or leaving them completely untitled, made things extremely awkward. From time to time the man with the torch extended his hand into the light. It held a piece of paper, which they anxiously compared with the title-page of a book. Then the volume was replaced and the tedious search went on.

Suddenly some slight noise—Gherkins was sure *he* did not make it; it may have been Bunter in the dining-room—seemed to catch the ear of the kneeling man.

"Wot's that?" he gasped, and his startled face swung round into view.

"Hands up!" said Lord Peter, and switched the light on.

The second man made one leap for the dining-room door, where a smash and an oath proclaimed that he had encountered Bunter. The kneeling man shot his hands up like a marionette.

"Gherkins," said Lord Peter, "do you think you can go across to that gentleman by the bookcase and relieve him of the

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article which is so inelegantly distending the right-hand pocket of his coat? Wait a minute. Don't on any account get between him and my pistol, and mind you take the thing out *very* carefully. There's no hurry. That's splendid. Just point it at the floor while you bring it across, would you? Thanks. Bunter has managed for himself, I see. Now run into my bedroom, and in the bottom of my wardrobe you will find a bundle of stout cord. Oh! I beg your pardon; yes, put your hands down by all means. It must be very tiring exercise."

The arms of the intruders being secured behind their backs with a neatness which Gherkins felt to be worthy of the best traditions of Sexton Blake, Lord Peter motioned his captives to sit down and despatched Bunter for whisky-and-soda.

"Before we send for the police," said Lord Peter, "you would do me a great personal favour by telling me what you were looking for, and who sent you. Ah! thanks, Bunter. As our guests are not at liberty to use their hands, perhaps you would be kind enough to assist them to a drink. Now, then, say when."

"Well, you're a gentleman, guv'nor," said the First Burglar, wiping his mouth politely on his shoulder, the back of his hand not being available. "If we'd a known wot a job this wos goin' ter be, blow me if we'd a touched it. The bloke said, ses 'e, 'It's takin' candy from a baby,' 'e ses. 'The gentleman's a reg'lar softie,' 'e ses, 'one o' these 'ere sersiety toffs wiv a maggot fer old books,' that's wot 'e ses, 'an' ef yer can find this 'ere old book fer me,' 'e ses, 'there's a pony fer yer.' Well! Sech a job! 'E didn't mention as 'ow there'd be five 'undred fousand bleedin' ole books all as alike as a regiment o' bleedin' dragoons. Nor as 'ow yer kept a nice little machine-gun like that 'andy by the bedside, *nor* yet as 'ow yer wos so bleedin' good at tyin' knots in a bit o' string. No—'e didn't think ter mention them things."

"Deuced unsporting of him," said his lordship. "Do you happen to know the gentleman's name?"

"No—that wos another o' them things wot 'e didn't mention. 'E's a stout, fair party, wiv 'orn rims to 'is goggles and a bald 'ead. One o' these 'ere philanthropists, I reckon. A friend o' mine, wot got inter trouble onct, got work froo 'im, and the



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gentleman comes round and ses to 'im, 'e ses, 'Could yer find me a couple o' lads ter do a little job?' 'e ses, an' my friend, finkin' no 'arm, you see, guv'nor, but wot it might be a bit of a joke like, 'e gets 'old of my pal an' me, an' we meets the gentleman in a pub dahn Whitechapel way. W'ich we was ter meet 'im there again Friday night, us 'avin' allowed that time fer ter git 'old of the book."

"The book being, if I may hazard a guess, the *Cosomgraphia universalis*?"

"Sumfink like that, guv'nor. I got its jaw-breakin' name wrote down on a bit o' paper, wot my pal 'ad in 'is 'and. Wot did yer do wiv that 'ere bit o' paper, Bill?"

"Well, look here," said Lord Peter, "I'm afraid I must send for the police, but I think it likely, if you give us your assistance to get hold of your gentleman, whose name I strongly suspect to be Wilberforce Pope, that you will get off pretty easily. Telephone the police, Bunter, and then go and put something on that eye of yours. Gherkins, we'll give these gentlemen another drink, and then I think perhaps you'd better hop back to bed; the fun's over. No? Well, put a good thick coat on, there's a good fellow, because what your mother will sav to me if you catch a cold I don't like to think."

So the police had come and taken the burglars away, and now Detective-Inspector Parker, of Scotland Yard, a great personal fricnd of Lord Peter's, sat toying with a cup of coffee and listening to the story.

"But what's the matter with the jolly old book, anyhow, to make it so popular?" he demanded.

"I don't know," replied Wimsey, "but after Mr. Pope's little visit the other day I got kind of intrigued about it and had a look through it. I've got a hunch it may turn out rather valuable, after all. Unsuspected beauties and all that sort of thing. If only Mr. Pope had been a trifle more accurate in his facts, he might have got away with something to which I feel pretty sure he isn't entitled. Anyway, when I'd seen—what I saw, I wrote off to Dr. Conyers of Yelsall Manor, the late owner—"

"Conyers, the cancer man?"

"Yes. He's done some pretty important research in his time, I fancy. Getting on now, though; about seventy-eight, I fancy.

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I hope he's more honest than his nephew, with one foot in the grave like that. Anyway, I wrote (with Gherkins' permission, naturally) to say we had the book and had been specially interested by something we found there, and would he be so obliging as to tell us something of its history. I also——"

"But what did you find in it?"

"I don't think we'll tell him yet, Gherkins, shall we? I like to keep policemen guessing. As I was saying, when you so rudely interrupted me, I also asked him whether he knew anything about his good nephew's offer to buy it back. His answer has just arrived. He says he knows of nothing specially interesting about the book. It has been in the library untold years, and the tearing out of the maps must have been done a long time ago by some family vandal. He can't think why his nephew should be so keen on it, as he certainly never pored over it as a boy. In fact, the old man declares the engaging Wilberforce has never even set foot in Yelsall Manor to his knowledge. So much for the fire-breathing monsters and the pleasant Sunday afternoons."

"Naughty Wilberforce!"

"M'm. Yes. So, after last night's little dust-up, I wired the old boy we were tooling down to Yelsall to have a heart-to-heart talk with him about his picture-book and his nephew."

"Are you taking the book down with you?" asked Parker.

"I can give you a police escort for it if you like."

"That's not a bad idea," said Wimsey. "We don't know where the insinuating Mr. Pope may be hanging out, and I wouldn't put it past him to make another attempt."

"Better be on the safe side," said Parker. "I can't come myself, but I'll send down a couple of men with you."

"Good egg," said Lord Peter. "Call up your myrmidons. We'll get a car round at once. You're coming, Gherkins, I suppose? God knows what your mother would say. Don't ever be an uncle, Charles; it's frightfully difficult to be fair to all parties."

Yelsall Manor was one of those large, decaying country mansions which speak eloquently of times more spacious than our own. The original late Tudor construction had been

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masked by the addition of a wide frontage in the Italian manner, with a kind of classical portico surmounted by a pediment and approached by a semi-circular flight of steps. The grounds had originally been laid out in that formal manner in which grove nods to grove and each half duly reflects the other. A late owner, however, had burst out into the more eccentric sort of landscape gardening which is associated with the name of Capability Brown. A Chinese pagoda, somewhat resembling Sir William Chambers' erection in Kew Gardens, but smaller, rose out of a grove of *laurustinus* towards the eastern extremity of the house, while at the rear appeared a large artificial lake, dotted with numerous islands, on which odd little temples, grottoes, tea-houses, and bridges peeped out from among clumps of shrubs, once ornamental, but now sadly overgrown. A boat-house, with wide eaves like the designs on a willow-pattern plate, stood at one corner, its landing-stage fallen into decay and wreathed with melancholy weeds.

"My disreputable old ancestor, Cuthbert Conyers, settled down here when he retired from the sea in 1732," said Dr. Conyers, smiling faintly. "His elder brother died childless, so the black sheep returned to the fold with the determination to become respectable and found a family. I fear he did not succeed altogether. There were very queer tales as to where his money came from. He is said to have been a pirate, and to have sailed with the notorious Captain Blackbeard. In the village, to this day, he is remembered and spoken of as Cut-throat Conyers. It used to make the old man very angry, and there is an unpleasant story of his slicing the ears off a groom who had been heard to call him 'Old Cut-throat'. He was not an uncultivated person, though. It was he who did the landscape-gardening round at the back, and he built the pagoda for his telescope. He was reputed to study the Black Art, and there were certainly a number of astrological works in the library with his name on the fly-leaf, but probably the telescope was only a remembrance of his seafaring days.

"Anyhow, towards the end of his life he became more and more odd and morose. He quarrelled with his family, and turned his younger son out of doors with his wife and children. An unpleasant old fellow.

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"On his deathbed he was attended by the parson—a good, earnest, God-fearing sort of man, who must have put up with a deal of insult in carrying out what he firmly believed to be the sacred duty of reconciling the old man to this shamefully treated son. Eventually, 'Old Cut-throat' relented so far as to make a will, leaving to the younger son 'My treasure which I have buried in Münster'. The parson represented to him that it was useless to bequeath a treasure unless he also bequeathed the information where to find it, but the horrid old pirate only chuckled spitefully, and said that, as he had been at the pains to collect the treasure, his son might well be at the pains of looking for it. Further than that he would not go, and so he died, and I dare say went to a very bad place.

"Since then the family has died out, and I am the sole representative of the Conyerses, and heir to the treasure, whatever and wherever it is, for it was never discovered. I do not suppose it was very honestly come by, but, since it would be useless now to try to find the original owners, I imagine I have a better right to it than anybody living

"You may think it very unseemly, Lord Peter, that an old, lonely man like myself should be greedy for a hoard of pirate's gold. But my whole life has been devoted to studying the disease of cancer, and I believe myself to be very close to a solution of one part at least of the terrible problem. Research costs money, and my limited means are very nearly exhausted. The property is mortgaged up to the hilt, and I do most urgently desire to complete my experiments before I die, and to leave a sufficient sum to found a clinic where the work can be carried on.

"During the last year I have made very great efforts to solve the mystery of 'Old Cut-throat's' treasure. I have been able to leave much of my experimental work in the most capable hands of my assistant, Dr. Forbes, while I pursued my researches with the very slender clue I had to go upon. It was the more expensive and difficult that Cuthbert had left no indication in his will whether Münster in Germany or Munster in Ireland was the hiding-place of the treasure. My journeys and my search in both places cost money and brought me no further on my quest. I returned, disheartened, in August, and

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found myself obliged to sell my library, in order to defray my expenses and obtain a little money with which to struggle on with my sadly delayed experiments."

"Ah!" said Lord Peter. "I begin to see light."

The old physician looked at him enquiringly. They had finished tea, and were seated around the great fireplace in the study. Lord Peter's interested questions about the beautiful dilapidated old house and estate had led the conversation naturally to Dr. Conyers' family, shelving for the time the problem of the *Cosmographia*, which lay on a table beside them.

"Everything you say fits into the puzzle," went on Wimsey, "and I think there's not the smallest doubt what Mr. Wilberforce Pope was after, though how he knew that you had the *Cosmographia* here I couldn't say."

"When I disposed of the library, I sent him a catalogue," said Dr. Conyers. "As a relative, I thought he ought to have the right to buy anything he fancied. I can't think why he didn't secure the book then, instead of behaving in this most shocking fashion."

Lord Peter hooted with laughter.

"Why, because he never tumbled to it till afterwards," he said. "And oh, dear, how wild he must have been! I forgive him everything. Although," he added, "I don't want to raise your hopes too high, sir, for, even when we've solved old Cuthbert's riddle, I don't know that we're very much nearer to the treasure."

"To the treasure?"

"Well, now, sir. I want you first to look at this page, where there's a name scrawled in the margin. Our ancestors had an untidy way of signing their possessions higgledy-piggledy in margins instead of in a decent, Christian way in the fly-leaf. This is a handwriting of somewhere about Charles I's reign: *Jac: Coniers*. I take it that goes to prove that the book was in the possession of your family at any rate as early as the first half of the seventeenth century, and has remained there ever since. Right. Now we turn to page 1099, where we find a description of the discoveries of Christopher Columbus. It's headed, you see, by a kind of map, with some of Mr. Pope's monsters swimming about in it, and apparently representing

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the Canaries, or, as they used to be called, the Fortunate Isles. It doesn't look much more accurate than old maps usually are, but I take it the big island on the right is meant for Llanzarote, and the two nearest to it may be Teneriffe and Gran Canaria."

# Liber V. DE NOVIS INSVLIS. quomodo, quando, & per quem illæ inventæ sint.

1099



Hristophorus Columbus natione Genuensis, cum diu in aula regis Hispan' rum deuersatus fuisset, animum induxit, ut hactenus inaccessas orbis partes p[er]ueneret. Perit namque a rege ut uisus suo non decesset, futuris sibi & rege Hisp[aniæ].

"But what's that writing in the middle?"

"That's just the point. The writing is later than *Jac: Coniers'* signature; I should put it about 1700—but, of course, it may have been written a good deal later still. I mean, a man who was elderly in 1730 would still use the style of writing he adopted as a young man, especially if, like your ancestor the

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pirate, he had spent the early part of his life in outdoor pursuits and hadn't done much writing."

"Do you mean to say, Uncle Peter," broke in the viscount excitedly, "that that's 'Old Cut-throat's' writing?"

"I'd be ready to lay a sporting bet it is. Look here, sir, you've been scouring round Münster in Germany and Munster in Ireland—but how about good old Sebastian Munster here in the library at home?"

"God bless my soul! Is it possible?"

"It's pretty nearly certain, sir. Here's what he says, written, you see, round the head of that sort of sea-dragon:

*Hic in capite draconis ardet perpetuo Sol.*

[Here the sun shines perpetually upon the Dragon's head.]

Rather doggy Latin—sea-dog Latin, you might say, in fact."

"I'm afraid," said Dr. Conyers, "I must be very stupid, but I can't see where that leads us."

"No; 'Old Cut-throat' was rather clever. No doubt he thought that, if anybody read it, they'd think it was just an allusion to where it says, further down, that 'the islands were called *Fortunate* because of the wonderful temperature of the air and the clemency of the skies.' But the cunning old astrologer up in his pagoda had a meaning of his own. Here's a little book published in 1678—Middleton's *Practical Astrology*—just the sort of popular handbook an amateur like 'Old Cut-throat' would use. Here you are: 'If in your figure you find Jupiter or Venus or *Dragon's Head*, you may be confident there is Treasure in the place supposed. . . . If you find *Sol* to be the Significator of the hidden Treasure, you may conclude there is Gold, or some jewels.' You know, sir, I think we may conclude it."

"Dear me!" said Dr. Conyers. "I believe, indeed, you must be right. And I am ashamed to think that if anybody had suggested to me that it could ever be profitable to me to learn the terms of astrology, I should have replied in my vanity that my time was too valuable to waste on such foolishness. I am deeply indebted to you."

"Yes," said Gherkins, "but where is the treasure, Uncle?"

"That's just it," said Lord Peter. "The map is very vague; there is no latitude or longitude given; and the directions,

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such as they are, seem not even to refer to any spot on the islands, but to some place in the middle of the sea. Besides, it is nearly two hundred years since the treasure was hidden, and it may already have been found by somebody or other."

Dr. Conyers stood up.

"I am an old man," he said, "but I still have some strength. If I can by any means get together the money for an expedition, I will not rest till I have made every possible effort to find the treasure and to endow my clinic."

"Then, sir, I hope you'll let me give a hand to the good work," said Lord Peter.

Dr. Conyers had invited his guests to stay the night, and, after the excited viscount had been packed off to bed, Wimsey and the old man sat late, consulting maps and diligently reading Münster's chapter "*De Novis Insulis*," in the hope of discovering some further clue. At length, however, they separated, and Lord Peter went upstairs, the book under his arm. He was restless, however, and, instead of going to bed, sat for a long time at his window, which looked out upon the lake. The moon, a few days past the full, was riding high among small, windy clouds, and picked out the sharp eaves of the Chinese tea-houses and the straggling tops of the unpruned shrubs. "Old Cut-throat" and his landscape-gardening! Wimsey could have fancied that the old pirate was sitting now beside his telescope in the preposterous pagoda, chuckling over his riddling testament and counting the craters of the moon. "If *Luna*, there is silver." The water of the lake was silver enough; there was a great smooth path across it, broken by the sinister wedge of the boat-house, the black shadows of the islands, and, almost in the middle of the lake, a decayed fountain, a writhing celestial dragon-shape, spiny-backed and ridiculous.

Wimsey rubbed his eyes. There was something strangely familiar about the lake; from moment to moment it assumed the queer unreality of a place which one recognizes without having ever known it. It was like one's first sight of the Leaning Tower of Pisa—too like its picture to be quite believable. Surely, thought Wimsey, he knew that elongated island on the right, shaped rather like a winged monster, with its two little



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clumps of buildings. And the island to the left of it, like the British Isles, but warped out of shape. And the third island, between the others, and nearer. The three formed a triangle, with the Chinese fountain in the centre, the moon shining steadily upon its dragon head. "*Hic in capite draconis ardet perpetuo*——"

Lord Peter sprang up with a loud exclamation, and flung open the door into the dressing-room. A small figure wrapped in an eiderdown hurriedly uncoiled itself from the window-seat.

"I'm sorry, Uncle Peter," said Gherkins. "I was so *dreadfully* wide awake, it wasn't any good staying in bed."

"Come here," said Lord Peter, "and tell me if I'm mad or dreaming. Look out of the window and compare it with the map—'Old Cut-throat's' 'New Islands'. He made 'em, Gherkins; he put 'em here. Aren't they laid out just like the Canaries? Those three islands in a triangle, and the fourth down here in the corner? And the boat-house where the big ship is in the picture? And the dragon fountain where the dragon's head is? Well, my son, that's where your hidden treasure's gone to. Get your things on, Gherkins, and damn the time when all good little boys should be in bed! We're going for a row on the lake, if there's a tub in that boat-house that'll float."

"Oh, Uncle Peter! This is a *real* adventure!"

"All right," said Wimsey. "Fifteen men on the dead man's chest, and all that! Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of Johnny Walker! Pirate expedition fitted out in dead of night to seek hidden treasure and explore the Fortunate Isles! Come on, crew!"

Lord Peter hitched the leaky dinghy to the dragon's knobbly tail and climbed out carefully, for the base of the fountain was green and weedy.

"I'm afraid it's your job to sit there and bale, Gherkins," he said. "All the best captains bag the really interesting jobs for themselves. We'd better start with the head. If the old blighter said head, he probably meant it." He passed an arm affectionately round the creature's neck for support, while he methodically pressed and pulled the various knobs and bumps of its anatomy. "It seems beastly solid, but I'm sure there's a spring

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somewhere. You won't forget to bale, will you? I'd simply hate to turn round and find the boat gone. Pirate chief, marooned on island and all that. Well, it isn't its back hair, anyhow. We'll try its eyes. I say, Gherkins, I'm sure I felt something move, only it's frightfully stiff. We might have thought to bring some oil. Never mind; it's dogged as does it. It's coming. It's coming. Booh! Pah!"

A fierce effort thrust the rusted knob inwards, releasing a huge spout of water into his face from the dragon's gaping throat. The fountain, dry for many years, soared rejoicingly heavenwards, drenching the treasure-hunters, and making rainbows in the moonlight.

"I suppose this is 'Old Cut-throat's' idea of humour," grumbled Wimsey, retreating cautiously round the dragon's neck. "And now I can't turn it off again. Well, dash it all, let's try the other eye."

He pressed for a few moments in vain. Then, with a grinding clang, the bronze wings of the monster clapped down to its sides, revealing a deep square hole, and the fountain ceased to play.

"Gherkins!" said Lord Peter. "We've done it. (But don't neglect baling on that account!) There's a box here. And it's beastly heavy. No; all right, I can manage. Gimme the boat-hook. Now I do hope the old sinner really did have a treasure. What a bore if it's only one of his little jokes. Never mind—hold the boat steady. There. Always remember, Gherkins, that you can make quite an effective crane with a boat-hook and a stout pair of braces. Got it? That's right. Now for home and beauty. . . . Hullo! What's all that?"

As he paddled the boat round, it was evident that something was happening down by the boat-house. Lights were moving about, and a sound of voices came across the lake.

"They think we're burglars, Gherkins. Always misunderstood. Give way, my hearties——

*"A-roving, a-roving, since roving's been my ru-i-in,  
I'll go no more a-roving with you, fair maid."*

"Is that you, my lord?" said a man's voice, as they drew in to the boat-house.

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"Why, it's our faithful sleuths!" cried his lordship. "What's the excitement?"

"We found this fellow sneaking round the boat-house," said the man from Scotland Yard. "He says he's the old gentleman's nephew. Do you know him, my lord?"

"I rather fancy I do," said Wimsey. "Mr. Pope, I think. Good evening. Were you looking for anything? Not a treasure, by any chance? Because we've just found one. Oh! Don't say that. *Maxima reverentia*, you know. Lord St. George is of tender years. And, by the way, thank you so much for sending your delightful friends to call on me last night. Oh, yes, Thompson, I'll charge him all right. You there, Doctor? Splendid. Now, if anybody's got a spanner or anything handy, we'll have a look at Great-grandpapa Cuthbert. And if he turns out to be old iron, Mr. Pope, you'll have had an uncommonly good joke for your money."

An iron bar was produced from the boat-house and thrust under the hasp of the chest. It creaked and burst. Dr. Conyers knelt down tremulously and threw open the lid.

There was a little pause.

"The drinks are on you, Mr. Pope," said Lord Peter. "I think, Doctor, it ought to be a jolly good hospital when it's finished."

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